

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present on behalf of people in Saskatchewan concerned about emergency medical services. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to not implement the consolidation and centralization of ambulance services as recommended in the EMS report and affirm its intent to work to improve community-based ambulance services.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition come from the community of Rose Valley.

I so present.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my petition to the Legislative Assembly also regards the provincial government's report, the Saskatchewan EMS (emergency medical services) development project, which calls for provincially run and centrally operated ambulance services. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to not implement the consolidation and centralization of ambulance services as recommended in the EMS report and affirm its intent to work to improve community-based ambulance services.

As in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition come from Fosston, Rose Valley, and Archerwill. And I'm pleased to present the petition on their behalf.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition to present today regarding the Fyke report:

Wherefore your petitions humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure the Wadena health centre be maintained at its current level of service at minimum, with 24-hour acute care, emergency and doctoral services available, as well as laboratory, public health, home care, and long-term care services for users from our district and beyond.

The people that have signed these petitions are all from Wadena.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of

citizens concerned about recommendations in the EMS report and the Fyke Commission report. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the consolidation and centralization of ambulance services as recommended in the EMS report and affirm its intent to work to improve community-based ambulance services.

Signatures on this petition this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, are all from the community of Rose Valley, and I'm proud to present on their behalf.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I present a petition this morning of citizens from the southwest concerned about the condition of Highway 43, and the prayer of relief reads as follows:

That your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call on the Saskatchewan government to repair Highway 43 from Vanguard to its junction with Highway 4 in order that area residents may have access to necessary services without endangering lives and property.

Your petitioners come from the communities of Aneroid, Mankota, Hazenmore, and Ponteix.

I so present.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the condition of Highway 339. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to repair Highway 339 in order to facilitate economic development initiatives.

And this petition is signed by individuals all from the community of Briercrest.

I so present.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too stand today to present a petition on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan that are very concerned about the high cost of energy. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to use a portion of its windfall oil and gas revenues to provide a more substantial energy rate rebate to Saskatchewan consumers.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And this is signed by the good folks from Assiniboia and Mossbank.

I so present. Thank you.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It may be hard to believe but I have still more petitions from the Swift Current and area on the subject of the hospital. And the prayer of the petition reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners will humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to carefully consider Swift Current's request for a new hospital.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by residents of Swift Current, Mankota, Herbert, Waldeck, Webb, Val Marie, and Saskatoon.

I so present.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of constituents of Weyburn-Big Muddy who believe that we need an in-patient treatment centre in the city of Weyburn. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to support this in-patient treatment centre in the city of Weyburn and provide funding for the same.

And the petition is signed by residents of Weyburn and Colgate.

I so present.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition today regarding Highway 35 that runs through Indian Head-Milestone constituency. The prayer reads as follows, it says:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to make the necessary repairs to Highway 35 in the Indian Head-Milestone constituency in order to prevent injury or loss of life and to prevent the loss of economic opportunity in the area.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by many people in that area — Fort San, Fort Qu'Appelle, Lipton — with their concerns about the highway.

I so present.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition today dealing with health care. The petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Redvers Health Centre be maintained at its current level of service at minimum, with 24-hour acute care, emergency and doctoral services available, as well as laboratory, physiotherapy, public health, home care, and long-term care services available to the users from our district, southeast Saskatchewan and southwest Manitoba, and beyond.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

These petitions, Mr. Speaker, come from the people of Redvers, Alida, Antler, Storthoaks.

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also would like to present a petition from citizens calling for immediate implementation of province-wide 911 emergency service. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause government to fulfill its promise to the people of rural Saskatchewan by immediately implementing the 911 emergency telephone system province-wide.

And as is duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens of Marcelin and Leask, Saskatchewan. Thank you.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present to do with the lack of funding to non-profit personal care homes. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide subsidies to non-profit personal care homes in the province so all seniors can be treated equally.

The good people of Atwater and Bangor have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here of citizens opposed to possible reduction of services to Davidson and Craik health centres. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Davidson and Craik health centres be maintained at their current level of service at minimum, with 24-hour acute care, emergency and doctoral services available, as well as lab, public health, home care, and long-term care services available to the users from the Craik and Davidson area and beyond.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by citizens from Davidson and Bladworth.

I so present.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition with citizens concerned about the EMS development project report that recommends the ambulance services of Wynyard, Wadena, and Foam Lake be all relocated to Elfros and downsized to two full-time ambulances and one part-time ambulance. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to not

implement the consolidation and centralization of ambulance services as recommended in the EMS report and to affirm its intent to improve community-based ambulance services.

And the people who signed this petition are from the good community of Wynyard.

I so present.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It sounds as though that I'm the only one over here with a light on.

Mr. Speaker, I have a petition here to maintain community ambulance services in the communities of Wynyard, Wadena, and Foam Lake. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to not implement the consolidation and centralization of ambulance services as recommended in the EMS report and to affirm its intent to improve community-based ambulance services.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition has been signed by the good people of Wynyard.

I so present.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present a petition, on behalf of constituents, dealing with centralization of ambulance services. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to not implement the consolidation and centralization of ambulance services as recommended in the EMS report and to affirm its intent to improve community-based ambulance services.

And signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from the communities of Wynyard and Bankend.

I so present.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition signed by the good citizens of Saskatchewan in regards to energy rates.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to use a portion of its windfall oil and gas revenues to provide a more substantial energy rate rebate to Saskatchewan consumers.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And, Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are from Shell Lake, Chitek Lake, Spiritwood, North Battleford, and Luseland.

I so present.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition signed by folks from the province concerned about the high energy costs. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to use a portion of its windfall oil and gas revenues to provide a more substantial energy rebate to the Saskatchewan consumers.

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by folks from Battleford and North Battleford.

I so present.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise with a petition from citizens who are very concerned about the ambulance coverage in rural Saskatchewan. And the pray reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to not implement the consolidation and centralization of ambulance services as recommended in the EMS report and affirm its intent to work to improve community-based ambulance services.

And as is duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good citizens of Aneroid.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and pursuant to rule 12(7) they are hereby read and received.

These are petitions from citizens of the province on 11 different matters that are addendums to previously tabled petitions.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 60 ask the government the following question:

To the minister of Crown Investments Corporation: how much has the government budgeted for the current advertising campaign SaskEnergy is running regarding the recent rate changes; including design, production, and advertising and purchase costs?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, once again we are joined by our colleagues from the Midwest Legislative Conference, sitting behind the government side today. Representative Pam Gulleon from North Dakota; Representative Willard Jenkins— and his wife Mrs. Jenkins is in the gallery along with Mrs. Skarphol — Representative Bob Skarphol; Representative Bob Tomlinson from Kansas. And

also in the gallery is Miss Ilene Grossman, who most of us will know as assistant director of the Midwestern Legislative Conference.

And I'd just ask all members to join in welcoming them to our legislature again today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly, a group of grade five and six students from Mankota.

There's 16 in all, and Mankota is very close to where I live. And the teacher with the students is Gail Gagnon, and the chaperones and drivers is Pam Zerr, Daniel Chabot, and Joanne Kress.

I've had an opportunity to meet briefly with the group. They're on a very tight schedule and I just hope they get a chance to stay for a few minutes of question period.

So would everyone please join me in welcoming the group from Mankota.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of 22 grade 12 students from Robert Southey School in Southey. They're sitting in your east gallery, Mr. Speaker. They're accompanied by their teacher, Mrs. Diana Ritter, and Mrs. Theresa Schaeffer is the chaperone.

I'll be meeting with them later this afternoon. I'll be interested in discussing their future plans seeing as these students are grade 12 students. And I look forward to meeting with them later this afternoon. And I'd ask all members in welcoming them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(13:45)

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

New Exhibits Planned for Duck Lake Centre

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Duck Lake Regional Interpretive Centre has unveiled plans for new exhibits in their 64 metre viewing tower. A Milestone artist by the name of Jack Pickering designed the three exhibits in conjunction with the Royal Museum of Saskatchewan.

The first exhibit will feature the lives of the First Nations people, their method of hunting and processing bison as well as their use of plants and vegetation for food and medicinal purposes.

The second will focus on the Métis culture, their distinct method for hunting bison for the pemmican trade and the social aspects of their lives.

The third, Mr. Speaker, will feature local pioneers and their struggles in the new land.

These new exhibits were made possible through \$335,000 in funding for the capital upgrades from the Canada-Saskatchewan Western Economic Partnership Agreement.

The Duck Lake Museum is a tourist attraction that we may all take pride in, Mr. Speaker. Opening nearly 10 years ago, the museum houses a collection of more than 4,000 artefacts from the North West Rebellion, the Hudson Bay Company, the North West Mounted Police as well as First Nation clothing and beadwork and pioneer tools and equipment.

I would like to take this opportunity to have all members join me in commending the Duck Lake community for building on the areas rich historical and cultural resources. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Maryfield Guest House and Studio Official Opening

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this last Saturday I had the privilege of attending the official opening of Atelier Manor in Maryfield.

Mr. Speaker, Atelier Manor is the refurbished hospital in Maryfield which owners, Jayne Raven, and her partner, Richard Childs, have transformed into an art gallery and guest house. Atelier meaning the artist's studio.

Jayne and Richard have also recently purchased the CN (Canadian National) rail station and plan on moving the building onto the property and turning it into an artist's studio and office space as well.

Their plans also include the development of a walkabout garden on the property.

Mr. Speaker, Jayne and Richard moved to Maryfield from BC (British Columbia) to establish this business endeavour. Richard, a stonemason, plans on including a lot of stonework to the buildings enhancing the appearance of the property and the community.

Since the opening of the property to the public last July, Atelier has had 90 guests stay at the manor including guests from England, BC, and Ontario.

By the number of guests for the official opening, it is obvious the community is very supportive of this business venture.

I might add one of the greatest supporters is a long-time nurse who spent many happy years in the facility and is pleased to see that the facility is being utilized rather than demolished.

Mr. Speaker, the only negative aspect of the opening was the comment about the atrocious state of Highway No. 48 in the area. Residents and the owners of the facility certainly trust the Department of Highways will give speedy approval for this rebuilding of Highway 48, which will encourage tourism to the community and to our province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Survey Indicates Post-Secondary Graduates Stay in Saskatchewan

Ms. Higgins: — Members of the opposition would have us all believe that no capable, intelligent, and educated young person would choose to stay in Saskatchewan. They would also have us believe that there are no meaningful opportunities for young people in this province.

Well the opposition would be way off track on this, Mr. Speaker, because young people do stay here, then they do find employment right here in Saskatchewan.

Many of the young people finding work in Saskatchewan are SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) graduates. According to SIAST's most recent survey of its graduates, 93 per cent of employed graduates who responded to the survey are working in Saskatchewan. And for the fifth consecutive year, the average monthly income for graduates working full time has increased.

This survey is a clear indication that SIAST is providing excellent training that leads to jobs, giving Saskatchewan's post-secondary institution graduates the chance to remain in their home province and to contribute to the future of it.

I want to take this opportunity to recognize the exceptional job that SIAST does of providing quality programs and training. And SIAST students recognize this as well.

In their surveys, the graduates overwhelmingly agreed that they received quality education. More than 95 per cent of the respondents rated program quality as good to excellent.

Mr. Speaker, we have educated and skilled graduates of post-secondary institutions staying in Saskatchewan. All members of this Assembly should recognize this as a positive thing, and these young people will help to build the future of the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Cops for Cancer Fundraiser

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Nipawin RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) detachment recently participated in the 2001 Cops for Cancer fundraiser in support of the Canadian Cancer Society.

The total amount raised by the event was about \$5,300. They had a great deal of help in reaching their financial target. Students at Wagner Elementary raised \$500, and four students also joined in to get their heads shaved.

There were also individuals who raised money on their own and allowed their heads to be shaved. Mitchell Stewart, a student from L.P. Miller, raised \$123; Garry McKay, \$150; and Bert Dalziel, whom the Legion raised \$500 for if he would take part.

There were also people who participated that just wanted to show their support or wished to shave their heads in memory of

family members who were victims of cancer.

On hand for the event were Canadian Cancer Society representatives for northeast Saskatchewan, directors Kate McCorrison, Wally Derkach. For McCorrison the event held personal significance, as she has been a cancer survivor for seven years.

RCMP members who took part were Cst. Wayne Love, Cst. Jason Willmets, Cst. Clifton Dunn, Cst. Donna Zawislak, Cst. Percy Lenz, St. Sgt. Max Mayan, and originally from the great town of Porcupine Plain, Cpl. Randy Serhan.

I would ask all members to join me in congratulating members of the Nipawin RCMP detachment for their fundraising efforts on behalf of the Canadian Cancer Society.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Dieppe Community Association Celebration

Mr. Kasperski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it was my pleasure to attend a very important event in my constituency this past Saturday afternoon. It was sponsored by the Dieppe Community Association and it was this association's celebration of The International Year of the Volunteer, Mr. Speaker.

And we all know that Saskatchewan is the volunteer capital of Canada, and certainly the members of Dieppe Community Association and that neighbourhood in my constituency were great examples of this effort.

Mr. Speaker, they had day-long activities for the families and students and children that were in attendance. I'd like to personally thank the members of the Dieppe Community Association, their president, Jody Tetlock and the members of their executive: Patti Cossette, Becki Ollinger, Tony and Louise Yaremchuk, Bonnie Krekewich, Carrie Siebenich, Carol Bieberdorf, and Gail Harleman.

Also great thanks to the staff and students of Dieppe School who provided some entertainment.

And last but not least, a special recognition to Mr. Norm Chadwick, a long-time Dieppe resident who received an honorary lifetime membership to the Dieppe Community Association.

Mr. Speaker, it was a fun day. The official activities started at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and were attended by myself, the mayor, and the local federal Member of Parliament. And it was noted that the wind got a little heavy at that time, and we hope it wasn't just because of the presentation of the dignitaries. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Macdowall District Volunteers Recognized

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise this afternoon to bring recognition to three very special people from the community of Macdowall.

Mr. Speaker, in this year of the volunteer, it is vitally important that we continually honour those that have put others ahead of themselves. There are three women from the Macdowall district who have done just that, Mr. Speaker: Margaret Shillington, Tena Wilkinson, and Kathleen Smith have spent decades ensuring that their community is and will continue to be the kind of place we all should be proud of.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday evening of June 11, Margaret, Tena, and Kathleen were invited to a specially arranged meeting so that they could be honoured for 15 years of dedicated service to the Macdowall Housing Authority. The success and longevity of the authority can be attributed in large part to the efforts of these three ladies.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating Margaret Shillington, Tena Wilkinson, and Kathleen Smith. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Training for Excellence Awards Luncheon

Ms. Jones: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier today, Saskatoon and the Bessborough Hotel played host to the Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board 2001 Training for Excellence Awards luncheon.

These awards recognize organizations that are investing in Saskatchewan's workforce. Over 50 organizations and partnerships have been honoured since 1995, with more than 450 organizations participating in the awards. This year, Mr. Speaker, there were 28 applications received from 21 organizations.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the winners in each category. And they are: basic skill development — Leadership Saskatchewan, Garvin and Associates Consulting. In career laddering — Career Pathways, Saskatchewan Joint Career Transition Committee.

Educational partnerships was won by two — Saskferco Products Inc. and A.E. Peacock Collegiate; and the second one was Social Housing Management Training Program, Saskatchewan Housing Corporation. Promotion of Aboriginal participation from SaskTel. Promotion of equity participation — Weyburn and Area Support Employment Services.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate all the participants in this year's Training for Excellence Awards and wish them the best of luck into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan High School Rodeo Association Finals

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am proud to rise in the House today and talk about accomplishments of a young man in my constituency; also my hometown.

Mr. Speaker, Vincent Northrop of Bladworth competed in the

bull riding event of the Saskatchewan High School Rodeo Association finals that were held on June 1, 2, and 3 in Shaunavon. Vincent finished in first place for the season. He also placed first overall for the finals.

This qualifies him to compete in the nationals for the high school rodeo that will be held in Springfield, Illinois the week of July 23 to 29. Last year, Vincent placed ninth at the nationals, and I have every reason to believe that he will do equally well this year if not better, Mr. Speaker.

Vincent has a busy summer ahead of him as this also qualifies him to compete in the Canadian finals in Regina on August 3 to 5. This will be Vincent's last year to be in High School Rodeo Association as he has recently completed his grade 12 in Davidson.

He is already well-known on the Canadian Cowboy Association circuit as he was recently named CCA Rookie of the Year. Vincent started competed in the CCA bull riding events when was 15 years old and will continue at the level for as long as he can.

I ask the members to join me in wish Vincent much luck in the upcoming national event.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Government's Responses to Ongoing Concerns

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Premier.

Every day Saskatchewan people wake up to another story about NDP (New Democratic Party) government failure and mismanagement: an RCMP investigation into fraudulent activities at SIGA (Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority) and the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority; 34 million taxpayers' dollars missing and unaccounted for in the First Nations Fund; the worst job losses in Saskatchewan since the Great Depression.

Mr. Speaker, *The StarPhoenix* columnist, Les MacPherson, said that the loss of 20,000 jobs is, and I quote: "nothing short of a disaster. The province is bleeding to death." And the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce is calling the NDP's job creation plan a menu for mediocrity.

Mr. Speaker, it doesn't matter who you talk to, everyone agrees that the NDP is failing the people of Saskatchewan. What new steps will the Premier take to address this crisis of public non-confidence in his own NDP government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite talks about the economy of Saskatchewan and its ability to produce jobs. As the Minister of Economic Development pointed out in this House yesterday, Mr. Speaker, we are facing an agricultural challenge in this province. I would have expected the Leader of the Opposition to know that. And that has had and will have

some very dramatic impact on jobs.

In spite of, Mr. Speaker, in spite of the crisis in agriculture, this economy continues to perform well and to perform strong. We understand the challenge that's before us, Mr. Speaker. We understand the challenge of creating a solid economy, a prosperous economy for our young people and for our people.

Mr. Speaker, what they do, they get up in the morning and try and figure out ways to attack the government. We get up in the morning and try and figure out ways to attack the problems faced by Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what we've been waking up to every morning is listening to the NDP cast blame for their own incompetence. One day and again today we heard it from the Premier — he's blaming farm families for his government's lousy job creation record. The next day he's blaming the nurses for the NDP's failing health reforms. They blame the Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker; they blame the media. They blame anybody but the NDP.

Meanwhile Saskatchewan is in the midst of a full-blown health care crisis. Saskatchewan's drinking water is making people sick. And now the NDP is gouging Saskatchewan families by driving Saskatchewan energy rates up, even as natural gas prices are plummeting.

Mr. Speaker, is there anything other than blaming nurses, blaming farmers, blaming hard-working people in Saskatchewan that this government can do?

The Premier right now needs to address the complete loss of confidence by Saskatchewan people and his failing NDP government. What's he going to do?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:00)

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, the members opposite and members of the general public know exactly what we're doing. We've partnered with Saskatchewan business people, with Saskatchewan leaders across this province, and have laid out what is described as the Partnership for Prosperity, Mr. Speaker, with targets, with action plan, with a taking on of the future, Mr. Speaker.

And we're doing this why? Because we believe in this province and we believe in its people and we believe in its future, unlike apparently the folks across the way.

The interesting question is, Mr. Speaker, they stand up and ask questions, but have they got a proposal? Have we heard one suggestion, Mr. Speaker?

Well here it is, here it is . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Well here it is, Mr. Speaker, right here,

in their platform from the last election on how to make this economy prosper, well here it is, here's how they'd do it. Well they'd grow the economy all right through a combination of tax cuts and highway spending initiative.

What have we done? Tax cuts and highway spending initiative.

They'd try and make business more competitive by eliminating bureaucratic red tape. What have we done? Reduced regulations by 25 per cent.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party plan would have grown Saskatchewan, would have created jobs, would have restored confidence, Mr. Speaker, in the . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — This government has lost jobs, is driving people from Saskatchewan, and is creating an economic death spiral in the province. Mr. Speaker, it's time to get rid of this incompetent, arrogant, out of touch, wimpy NDP government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Later today, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party will be moving a vote of non-confidence in the NDP government's ability to manage the affairs of this province.

Mr. Speaker, my question for the Premier: will he admit that his leadership has failed the people of Saskatchewan?

His NDP government has plunged our province into an economic death spiral with no plan for pulling out, and the incompetence of the NDP is smashing the confidence of Saskatchewan people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if the Leader of the Opposition is aware of the chamber of commerce's slogan for this year. He ought to take some counsel from that slogan. You know what their slogan is, Mr. Speaker? Up Your Attitude — Up Your Attitude.

Mr. Speaker, he comes into this House, he comes into this House, Mr. Speaker . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, he comes into this House talking about . . . can you believe it? The Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition comes into this House talking about a province in a death spiral.

Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, I repeat again today, the only group of men and women in this province in a death spiral are members of the Saskatchewan Party, and everybody knows it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Job Losses in 2000-01

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I marvel at the calmness with which this government reacted to the devastating news that in the month of May Saskatchewan lost 5,400 jobs, and in last year lost a total of 21,000 jobs.

What was the reaction of the Minister of Economic Development? Well he said that what we have now is a bit of a valley. If the minister describes the loss of 21,000 jobs as a bit of a valley, I hope this province never sees anything he would consider serious.

My question for the Premier. Your minister of economic disaster considers the loss of 21,000 jobs as a trifling matter. And he says it's everybody's fault. He says it's StatsCanada's fault for talking this province down. What is your response? Do you . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Just before the minister responds, I'd remind the member to direct his questions through the Chair.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, very much. Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, the loss of 16,800 jobs in agriculture is not trifling. It's a very serious matter, Mr. Speaker, and we've known that this has been a problem in our province for a considerable period of time.

But what members opposite — well if the members want to listen — but what members opposite fail to recognize are some of the positive signs with respect to the growth of our economy. Retail sales have increased; the value of new building permits is up 33 per cent; new motor vehicle sales — there is consumer confidence, Mr. Speaker.

But I want to say to members opposite, what they need to do is take some advice from the Chamber of Commerce of Saskatchewan and up their attitude. This province is a good place to work; it is a good place to do business. And we will come through this agriculture difficulty. We will continue to diversify this economy. And we'll continue to grow jobs in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, placing the priority on overseas' investments by our Crowns has been a total failure.

When our civil servants go to England to market the new on-line land system, I'm sure the first question of the Brits has to be: and how's it working for you blokes in Canada? And the answer has to be that: it isn't because we haven't got the bugs out of it yet.

Most recently a memo was sent to Land Titles' users in Moose Jaw informing them that implementation has been delayed again. The memo gives no new date when the system will be operational nor is there yet a fee schedule.

Mr. Speaker, why are we spending money flying civil servants

around the world to market a system we can't get up and running? Is this the government's idea of economic development? Is ISC (Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan) the NDP's GigaText?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, as we know the land corporation, now the Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan, has been received with, with great expectation and opportunity by lawyers, by real estate agents, by surveyors, by the business community, Mr. Speaker. All are looking forward to this new venture which will make the transfer of land quicker, cheaper, and more efficient in this province, and therefore be good for business, Mr. Speaker, which this member should be supporting, not criticizing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, the Crown corporations are on their own agenda and have made it clear they do not want interference from the government that owns it.

Alone in the western world, the NDP government sees government purchase of companies as an engine for economic growth. The results speak for themselves.

When the former minister had the gall to question ISC's business plan, she got a tongue-lashing from a civil servant she had dared to question. The Premier appears to have sided with the official. Such behaviour on the part of the Premier seriously weakens not just one minister but the entire cabinet. Cabinet government cannot function if ministers know that in trying to give directions to their departments, the Premier will leave the minister to hang out to dry.

My question for the Premier: has the official who wrote the memo criticizing the minister who dared to question his travel been disciplined? What measure has been taken since that memo to demonstrate that the Crown officials are under cabinet direction?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not quite sure I fully understand the member's question, but if he gives me the information more fully I'll look into it and get back to him tomorrow.

But let me say this, Mr. Speaker. The land corporation will be cheaper, will be more efficient, will be quicker, will be good for business in this province, and, Mr. Speaker, it is something that will generate economic activity, jobs in the high-tech sector, Mr. Speaker.

It'll be in place in two weeks in Moose Jaw and it'll be in place across this province within the planned period of time, Mr. Speaker.

It's a good project and the member should be supporting it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Strike by Health Care Workers

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. Now that there has been a mediator appointed in the health care contract dispute between CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees) and SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations), there is some hope that a settlement in this dispute may be reached.

But while it is encouraging that both sides will be going back to the bargaining table, it is discouraging that the union has not prepared to return to their jobs. Many health care facilities are having trouble providing basic patient or resident care, and many families are unable to cope with the level of care an aging or medically fragile family member requires.

The Regina Health District appealed to the union for some relief and essential service workers, but CUPE refused. Surely now that both sides are negotiating again, there should be some movement to get people back on the job.

Mr. Speaker, has the minister contacted the union and asked them to return to their jobs so that essential services are provided while mediation takes place?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, we all are concerned about the patients and the residents, especially of the long-term care homes, and all of the people who are working to provide care for these people.

We know that the issue of essential services is being discussed between SAHO and CUPE, and that CUPE has provided essential services in many areas. There are some areas that they haven't acceded to the request directly, of SAHO, but I understand that today some of the CUPE officials are working together with some of the district management people to address exactly the question that the member asks.

What we know is that we need to have these people get back to the bargaining table and get these issues that are between them resolved so that the people who are in the system can get the care that they need.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are hearing from families of patients who are affected by the strike. Mr. Craig Smith writes that the situation in some of the long-term care homes, and especially where his mother resides, is very difficult. He is afraid for her well-being and is left wondering how they will manage to care for her. He states, and I quote:

It is incumbent that the government ensure that these people are not left in this situation.

Mr. Speaker, Mae Uhrich of Camrose, Alberta was notified by the Prairie West Health District last Friday that she had to come to care for her mother who has been completely bedridden in the Kindersley health facility for some time. It was extremely short notice for the family and she says that they are not trained

to provide the kind of care her mother needs.

Mr. Speaker, many health care facilities feel that they are at the breaking point with the level of service and care that is needed.

Will the minister undertake to ask the CUPE members directly to return to their jobs while mediation takes place?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, as I've said for the last couple of days, the situation is being monitored hourly by the department.

And what happens is that the mediator will be coming later today. Obviously the first item on his agenda is to talk with the parties to get the people back to work. We are encouraging the workers to go back to work. We're encouraging that management get back to the table. They're all going back to the table.

We know that this is a dispute that has to be resolved at the bargaining table and the parties on Sunday agreed to go with a mediator. That man is now coming and we look forward to him working on both the issues of the immediate care of patients, but also the longer-term solutions. And that's what we're going to do. We're going to work together with the people that are involved here.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Issues at the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the minister responsible for Liquor and Gaming.

It has been revealed that several officials with Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority had concerns that SIGA's CEO (chief executive officer), Dutch Lerat was allegedly using drugs or was allegedly involved in the sale of drugs as early as 1999, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when did the minister first become aware that SLGA (Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority) officials were concerned about either alleged criminal activity or alleged drug use by Mr. Lerat?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — I thank the member opposite for the question, Mr. Speaker. As the court documents were filed and Mr. Glendinning's statements were put before the courts would be the time that that information came to my attention. This matter is before a court process, Mr. Speaker, so to comment further would be entirely inappropriate, and I would refuse to then comment any further on the member's question, as I would be held in contempt of court, Mr. Speaker.

But that would be my answer to the question he's posed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:15)

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question referred to meetings that the minister was at, and I think she could answer that because she's not in court here and she's not

a witness there.

Mr. Speaker, again my question for the minister of Liquor and Gaming. It has been revealed that Mr. Lerat received a salary advance from SIGA in 1999 in the amount, Mr. Speaker, of \$80,000. Mr. Speaker, when did the minister first become aware that Mr. Lerat had been granted a salary advance in that amount? Did the minister approve that salary advance, and if she didn't, why not?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, that information would have been provided through the auditing processes to the internal auditors and to the Provincial Auditor. The circumstances around that would have been discussed between those people, and if there was something that would be needed to be brought to my attention, that would be identified by the external auditor for SIGA by our Provincial Auditor to me, Mr. Speaker. That was not commented upon either in the Provincial Auditor's reporting or the external auditor's report because it had been dealt with as an internal matter.

Mr. Speaker, I would not be responsible to grant salaries to members of the SIGA organization. As an independent organization they have an independent board responsible for that kind of a salary advance. Mr. Speaker, it would not come to my attention.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskEnergy Rates

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the minister responsible for SaskEnergy.

Mr. Speaker, today it's been reported that ATCO gas has applied to the regulator in Alberta for approval to reduce residential natural gas rates to \$5.41 per gigajoule in Calgary and \$4.95 per gigajoule in Edmonton — that's the price to the consumer.

Meanwhile the NDP has just increased SaskEnergy rates to \$6.30 a gigajoule for Saskatchewan families — that's to the consumer.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party asked the NDP to reconsider its massive SaskEnergy rate increase last week. We said the NDP didn't need the increase in light of the plummeting price for natural gas.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: why were the Premier and the minister in such a hurry to raise rates in Saskatchewan last week to \$6.30 a gigajoule when other gas companies were preparing to drop their gas prices to as low as \$4.95?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well here we go again — the \$20 million man, Mr. Speaker. The \$20 million expert over there. Mr. Speaker, at least in the 1980s, Grant Devine only cost us \$2 million a day, not 20 million, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to point out to the member and to the public of Saskatchewan. First of all, Mr. Speaker, ATCO has about 25 per cent of the customers in Alberta, Mr. Speaker, so it doesn't represent all of the consumers of energy in Alberta, Mr. Speaker.

As well, the member neglects to tell us, Mr. Speaker, that included in that application is not the insurance or the collar as I would describe it. Saskatchewan . . . SaskEnergy pays about 50 cents a gigajoule for that insurance, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, transportation costs are not included, Mr. Speaker. There are a list of costs that are not included, Mr. Speaker.

And — pay attention to this — when does the contract expire? January 31, 2002. Guess what the prices might be in January, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the NDP can't have it both ways. They can't on one hand take credit for SaskEnergy's gas purchasing policies over the winter months and then not take responsibility for those purchases today, Mr. Speaker. They can't have it both ways.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, last week Saskatchewan people were slapped with a 24 per cent rate increase, and this week we're being forced to listen to NDP radio ads paid for by the taxpayers that tell us to be grateful for having to pay 24 per cent more.

Mr. Speaker, here's how the NDP's latest radio ad goes. It starts with a question. The ad asks: what's SaskEnergy doing about high natural gas prices? Well, Mr. Speaker, apparently the answer is: they're marking them up even further and passing them on directly to Saskatchewan people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday ATCO applied to reduce residential gas prices to 5.41 in Calgary and 4.95 in Edmonton. Why? Well it's because gas prices are going down.

The question to the minister is this: how long will he force SaskEnergy gas consumers to pay rates significantly higher than the current cost for gas before he directs the Crown to reapply to the panel for a decrease?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, you know, I . . . Mr. Speaker, I've patiently, day after day after day, listened to that member talk about credibility in terms of due diligence, the credibility of the senior people in the Saskatchewan Energy Corporation and whether or not they've been able to do their job, whether they've done it credibly. But he knows more, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you how much that hall of famer

knows. This is the same guy who in the end of the 1980s worked for the associate minister of Economic Development and Tourism, Mr. Gerich . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order, order.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I know they don't want to hear it, but he was responsible for putting together the due diligence that resulted in a \$150,000 grant to bring to Swift Current, Saskatchewan, a music hall of fame. He then left the employment of that same minister, went to work over there, and it was bankrupt two years later.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this credibility cost . . . would have cost the people of Saskatchewan \$20 million the other day. I think there's a lack of credibility here.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Well it's official, Mr. Speaker. The minister or the Government House Leader has officially lost his mind because he got up to answer a question on gas prices. We'll, if he wants to answer it, we'll give him one more chance, Mr. Speaker.

Here's the question. In Alberta today, consumers, consumers are going to benefit from the fact that rates are going down by over 40 per cent to \$4.95 a gigajoule. The question is simple. Why is SaskEnergy charging Saskatchewan families \$6.31 a gigajoule when the private Alberta gas companies are in the process of cutting their rates to \$4.95?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, the member might have it wrong. But I'll tell you, you know what the question's about? It's about integrity — that's what it's about. And it's about trust, Mr. Speaker — that's what it's about.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I listened with some interest to a CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) news report today at noon that speaks to integrity and that speaks to trust. And I want to tell you, sir, we will match this side of the House with respect to integrity, trust; with respect to honesty; and with respect to competence any day.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order, order.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Rehabilitation of Avonlea Dam

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, and members of the Legislative Assembly, it is my pleasure to announce to you today of our government's plans to rehabilitate the water management infrastructure for the people in the southern community of Avonlea.

Avonlea dam was constructed in the early 1960s and is owned and operated by Sask Water. Located on Avonlea Creek approximately 60 kilometres southeast of Moose Jaw, this 14.6 metre high earth-filled dam is in need of repair. Sask Water estimates a one in four chance of this dam failing over the next

50 years.

This, Mr. Speaker, is a public safety concern. A failure could also cause significant damage to a downstream regional park, golf course, and highway, as well as two farm sites and agricultural land.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to inform you today that Sask Water has developed a plan to address the public safety concerns, and will be proceeding with project rehabilitation this fall. The work will reduce the chance of failure to one in 200 over a 50-year period.

As mentioned in our last two annual reports, Mr. Speaker, a critical strategic issue facing Sask Water is the deterioration of the province's water management infrastructure. While our primary concern is for public safety, it's important to note how vital water is to sustain and enhance economic growth for a community, and in this case, Mr. Speaker, a rural community.

Mr. Speaker, over the next year Sask Water will work with local governments and residents in the Avonlea area to assess the feasibility of increasing the reservoir capacity to satisfy current and future water allocation needs. The project rehabilitation will proceed concurrently with these discussions, and this work will not impair the prospects of increasing the reservoir capacity.

Mr. Speaker, we want to ensure water from the reservoir continues to adequately address the water supply needs for the town of Avonlea, the Avonlea irrigation district, a rural pipeline, Dunnet Regional Park, Long Creek Golf &Country Club, and potential future users.

Mr. Speaker, water is our most precious resource. As Saskatchewan's water manager, Sask Water's mandate is to manage, protect, and develop the province's water and related land resources for the benefit of people throughout Saskatchewan.

This project at Avonlea is just one example of how Sask Water works with water users to sustain the quantity and quality of water in our province. Mr. Speaker, we truly look forward to working with the people in the Avonlea area on this very important project. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Elhard: — With leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the House, I'd like to introduce a group of elementary school students from the community of Consul, from the Consul Public School.

During the last year, the previous Speaker and I — not the old Speaker, but the previous Speaker and I — had the opportunity of visiting the community of Consul and made a presentation to many of these very students. They greeted us enthusiastically

with a lot of questions. We took a lot of pictures. It was a very memorable occasion.

They have chosen to join us here today to find out about the real work that we do. Unfortunately they may have been disappointed in some of the work they saw. But if they stick around for a little longer, they may see something of real benefit and substance.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce you to the 19 students of grade 5 and 6 at the Consul School. Accompanied by the teacher, Trudy Bethel, and by chaperones, Dave Manley, Tony Fieger, and Jackie Zilkie, and their bus driver, Peggy Brown. Please join me in welcoming the students and their adult accompaniments today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Rehabilitation of Avonlea Dam

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to respond to the minister's statement. I'd like to thank him for sending a copy over to me in advance.

Looking at this, I'm quite sure the people of Avonlea will be happy with this statement. I know last year I raised concerns about the Avonlea dam and the safety of it in Estimates. And I'm glad that the minister — I'm not sure whether it was the previous minister that was there last year or you as the minister — took concerns of this, took notice of this and addressed the concerns and safety of that area because I had many calls over that dam.

And also not only the safety issues, the water supply, which will supply the town in the future; the irrigation district, which is important; rural pipeline. I'm also helping out the golf and country club and also potential future users.

(14:30)

And I hope, Mr. Speaker, that this minister will make it a new policy direction that Sask Water will be upgrading the many dams throughout this province because there are many dams throughout this province . . . and I've had some calls that they are concerned about safety issues. Plus also upgrading them to expand irrigation which is very important, which he had mentioned in here. The safety water concerns which are growing out there for people; rural pipelines so towns can get safe, clean drinking water. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling on a Point of Order

The Speaker: — Members of the Assembly, before orders of the day, I would like to comment on two items. First with respect to a point of order raised yesterday and secondly, with respect to rule 36.

Yesterday the Opposition House Leader, the member of Cannington, raised a point of order requesting tabling of a document by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. I have reviewed the transcript of page 1694 of *Hansard*. The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs in her comments referred to a letter but she did not quote from the letter. Therefore the point is not well taken and the minister is not required to table the letter.

Money Recommendation for a Private Member's Bill

The Speaker: — A second item. It is the practice of this Assembly . . . Order, order. It is the practice of this Assembly for the Speaker to review all Bills after they have been introduced and read the first time, for their procedural acceptability in regards to rule 36. Rule 36 stipulates that no Bill that necessitates an appropriation of any part of the public revenue should be considered by the Assembly without having first been recommended by the Lieutenant Governor.

Speakers have consistently upheld the constitutional principle of Crown initiative in financial matters. Members of the Executive Council are held strictly accountable for all public expenditures and accordingly, only they may initiate legislation involving the imposition of new or additional charges upon the public revenue or for the raising of any tax.

Over the past few days I've had the opportunity to review a number of Bills and I wish to draw your attention to Bill No. 204, The Justice System Review Act introduced by the member from Rosthern and presently standing on the order paper for second reading under the heading, private members' public bills and orders. The question that I must address is whether Bill 204 contravenes the parliamentary principle of the Crown initiative in financial matters.

Clause 2(1) of Bill 204 seeks to establish a commission of inquiry to review the Saskatchewan justice system. Clause 2(2) provides for the appointment of one or more commissioners by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. I'll refer members to the ruling of May 6, 1998 where it was ruled that the creation of a commission and the appointment of a commission . . . of commission employees clearly constitutes an expenditure of public funds requiring a royal recommendation. Similarly, a ruling on April 7, 1997 found that the creation of a health Ombudsman as an officer of the Assembly and the associated office entailed the expenditure of additional funds, which in turn infringed upon the Crown initiative.

Likewise, I find that Bill No. 204 requires such a recommendation. The member for Rosthern is not a member of the Executive Council and is not entitled to obtain such a recommendation. Accordingly, I must rule this Bill out of order and advise the Assembly that it will be removed from the order paper.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government, a very open and accountable government, Mr. Speaker, and table a response to question no. 224.

The Speaker: — The response to 224 is tabled.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 9 — Job Creation Record

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the legislature this afternoon. I want to discuss an item that is very serious in my opinion and I think in the opinion of all of Saskatchewan.

The situation is so serious that, at the end of my discussion, I would like to move a motion really referring to the confidence the people have in the government in Saskatchewan as of today.

Mr. Speaker, this particular motion that I'm going to be talking about is based particularly on a very dismal job creation record that was just put forward by Statistics Canada very recently. But it's bigger than that, Mr. Speaker.

There's a number of issues that have caused real concern in the confidence in this government and of Saskatchewan at this time. And I want to just refer to one or two of the bigger issues and the bigger items that will lead to making this motion that I want to bring up later.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, not only is the job loss very serious and critical. There's other items.

The current situation in health care is a real problem for Saskatchewan. It's only a symptom of what is going on, the symptom of something that is bigger. And that of course is the way the health care has been managed over the last number of years. This is showing the problem with the confidence of people in this government.

As we've talked about at length in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, the tainted water and the water scandal problems in Saskatchewan have caused a lot of concern and a lot of danger. And the way that was handled and tried to be covered up with no problems, that attitude is not leading to confidence in this province.

There's also the ongoing scandal presently with the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority, and also the competence has been questioned in the Saskatchewan Indian and Gaming Authority as well.

Now just very recently, Mr. Speaker, the government released a document called the *Partnership for Prosperity*. That's the third document that's been released talking about the economic development strategies in this province.

The first one that was brought forward several years ago was called *Partnership for Renewal*. It promised job creation. It promised that this province would be moving forward. There is no evidence that that is the case.

Another one came out very shortly after that — *Partnership for Growth*. Again targeted a large number of jobs to be created. It targeted economic development. And what happened to that one, Mr. Speaker? Nothing happened that we can see. And again the confidence of the people started to question whether

this government has the ability to actually put together a strategy.

Well just recently, another one — *Partnership for Prosperity*. People looked at it again and said here we go again: *Partnership for Prosperity*.

They're talking about creating 3,000 . . . 30,000 new jobs. They talked about how the economy should be driven by private sector but they immediately then said it should be in partnership with Crown corporations. That does not send the right signals, Mr. Speaker. That is not the way to build confidence in our economy.

Mr. Speaker, when we were talking about support or non-support for this last program called *Partnership for Prosperity*, and the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce was quoted as being supportive of this particular project.

I'd like to draw your attention to an article. It's a headline in fact, in Friday, June 8, *The StarPhoenix* in Saskatoon where they talk about this. And I will quote from the paper, Mr. Speaker:

The provincial government's new economic strategy is not nearly ambitious enough to address Saskatchewan's economic issues . . . (and does not) provide policies to support those goals.

Now it goes on to say, and this is a quote from the paper again:

"For the life of me, I can't see why they're so timid," . . .

This is a quote from Kent Smith-Windsor, the executive director of the Saskatoon and District Chamber of Commerce. There's a real example of when an initiative for economic development was put forward it is questioned by the business community of Saskatchewan.

At the same time the target for 30,000 new jobs was being put forward, which coincidentally was the same target put forward in the 1999 NDP election strategy campaign, and apparently that was just referred to as, oh it was just a target; we didn't intend on it.

So here we have in fact at this exact time 21,000 jobs being lost in this province — 21,000 jobs lost, not gained. That's the largest decrease since 1976, and we're not sure about that because '76 was when the statistics were first being kept. Some actually speculate that this might be the worst job loss record since the 1930s, during the Great Depression. That is certainly not a way to inspire confidence in this province.

That number of jobs, Mr. Speaker, is actually 4.3 per cent in the drop . . . percentage of the all the people working in this province. That is a very, very serious situation. That in fact, Mr. Speaker, is roughly equal to the entire working population of Prince Albert or the working population of Moose Jaw. That would be devastating in those communities and it is equally devastating in this province.

At the same time that this kind of job loss was being experienced here in Saskatchewan, what we were finding that in

Manitoba, similar economy with similar population, they're creating jobs. They are not losing jobs; they're creating — they've created a thousand jobs.

When we look at Alberta, of course you know that that's going to be a creation . . . and that was creating 45,000 jobs. We've lost 21,000; you can see where most of our jobs have gone in this province.

I've talked about this before in this legislation, Mr. Speaker, where even though Alberta might not have all the answers, it's certainly an indication of where people are wanting to move and where they are in fact moving. I see that in a very, very direct way in the constituency in which I live.

The problem that I think, Mr. Speaker, is that the attitude of the government is not in fact trying to put forward an economic development strategy that is positive, in fact it's turning the other way around because the signals being sent from their strategy is actually anti-business. It's competitive against the Crown corporations. It's anti-growth — the bigger government, the better. The taxes continue to keep going up. There are indications that in parts of the economy the taxes might be doing the right thing. I'd like to see that encouraged and expanded so that where the high taxes would be starting to make a difference in this problem.

But all of those things are causing the problem of economic downturn in this province, and again I believe that that's at a record level and it is so serious that it brings me to conclude that the confidence of this province is just not in place.

What is happening when you put all these things together, the bigger picture shows that it is a whole series of downturns in the economy. One thing affects another and the whole thing becomes related to each other. It becomes really a catalyst with one of the items affecting another.

For instance when we don't have 21,000 people working, those people are not prepared to buy housing. We just heard from the member in the government today that building permits were actually on the increase. Statistics Canada and Saskatchewan . . . the monitoring agency looking at housing starts actually shows that housing starts in Saskatchewan has dropped over 40 per cent in the recent months. That is not confidence and it's a basis of what the problems are in terms of jobs.

And jobs again are just a symptom of the bigger problem. The bigger problem is again the confidence that is needed for business to invest in this province. If there's no confidence to invest, there's no businesses. If businesses are not staying in the province you're not going to get the jobs, and one thing leads to another.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:45)

Mr. Wakefield: — Another indication, Mr. Speaker, is the Canada West Foundation reported very recently 40 per cent of all young people in Saskatchewan plan to leave the province and search for work elsewhere. Again a very devastating statistic that was published very recently. When we read those

kinds of things, we really wonder if in fact those people will ever have an opportunity to come back to this province.

We don't want to try to belittle the fact that this province hasn't got a lot of advantages. What we're trying to say, Mr. Speaker, is that the advantages of this province are not being promoted to the point where there is confidence for people to return, for businesses to come, and for investments to create these kind of jobs.

When we look at other aspects of our economy, we see the same signals happening. We see in the gas prices, for instance, we just were referring to the price of natural gas recently in Saskatchewan being charged at a rate that is exceptional to other provinces. Alberta again is always an indicator of where the market trends are going to go. Certainly Alberta was blamed for the problems in the natural gas industry earlier on. Alberta is now showing that the natural gas prices on the stock market and the prices that they're prepared to charge is actually on a decline, which is exactly opposite to what is happening here in this province. Again it's a signal and that signal does not instill confidence.

Those kinds of things are not the kind of story that we want to have in this province. And what this government is doing is putting forward those signals and saying: don't worry about it, everything is just fine. If we talk about how well the province is doing, maybe somehow magically it will turn around and people will start feeling better about themselves and economic development will occur.

I don't disagree that we have to feel proud of the people that are still here and the businesses that are prospering in spite of what is happening in this province. And when we put together a program such as Saskatchewan Grows, well what we have to make sure is that not just talking about the advantages of Saskatchewan, not talking about how well some of the businesses are doing, we have to make sure that there's policies and we have to make sure that there's vision in place to back up those kinds of statements. Without the policies and programs in place, again it is empty words, and empty words leads to, again, this non-confidence.

Mr. Speaker, the government has talked about the decline in the jobs here in Saskatchewan as primarily a problem of the farming community. Granted there is serious problems on the farm and a lot of the farm jobs are not there. Again, it's a symptom of something bigger. The symptom is that the agricultural sector is not being supported the way it should be, and the confidence of people to invest and work and stay in the agricultural sector is not there.

And even if we take the government jobs out of the equation . . . the agricultural jobs out of that equation, there is still a decline in job creation in this province, unlike any other province in Saskatchewan.

When we can't put that . . . when we haven't got that kind of confidence to increase the number of jobs in this province, how on earth are we ever going to make the great strides needed to make sure the Aboriginal employment will start to show in this province. That is a very large . . . very large problem and I think a very large opportunity.

Again we need the confidence of investment in this province and we need to make sure that when people want to stay there is opportunities, and nothing that I've seen lately would indicate that those opportunities are there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wakefield: — One of the positive things that I have to admit occurred was the reduction in the small business tax. That is a direction . . . the tax cut is a direction that is the right thing to do, and I think an example should be made of that.

The problem though is, again, it's not exactly the signal that we want issued. Even though the tax is going in the right direction, Saskatchewan has not taken the opportunity to lead in this tax cut. Saskatchewan is following in this tax cut.

Other provinces are now having a lower rate of small-business tax, and I believe that we could be a real leader and send the right signals and not just be a follower, following along.

We also see that the property tax is increasing and continuing to increase and that is a direct result of downloading onto the municipal governments by this particular province, not giving them any support for being able to assist in their predicaments in terms of infrastructure and in terms of servicing and supplying the services that are needed. And therefore, even though the government's budget might look better, the people's personal budgets are very, very stressed because of those downloading onto the municipal governments and through them to the taxpayers.

The Crown corporation is another problem that creates the wrong signal in this province. If Crown corporations continue to keep competing in businesses with private enterprise, what business is going to have the confidence to come to this province and in fact try to invest, and having to spend its own tax money to compete against itself.

Those signals will just not allow the economy to move ahead with outside interest or even allow the people in Saskatchewan to remain with confidence. Again, it's the signals that are the problem and those signals are just not putting the confidence in this government that is needed in this province to make sure it moves ahead.

You can talk a good game, but you really have to put your programs and policies in place for that to happen.

And as the utility rates keep climbing, that is not an economic advantage when the utility rates go up, even though there is a campaign in the papers and on the media now saying that really the Crown corporations and SaskEnergy really are the good people because they could have been a lot worse than they are now. That is not a positive statement at all; that is not a confidence builder in this province.

This government has followed that particular program over the last 10 years. It has been doing the same kind of things. In fact, I think those kinds of signals, the negative signals to economic development are actually increasing in the wrong direction. And I think this government from what we see, what the people in the province see . . . in Saskatchewan see, they're just lurching

from one crisis till the next crisis to the next crisis and hoping they can get through that. Again, not the right signals.

Now, Mr. Speaker, because of all that and what I've just talked about, I believe this government has lost the confidence of the people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wakefield: — And I would at this time, Mr. Speaker, move a motion, seconded by the member from North Battleford:

That this Assembly expresses its non-confidence in the provincial government due to the policies that have led to Saskatchewan having the worst job creation record in the country, including the loss of 21,000 jobs in the last 12 months and the loss of 24,300 jobs since the NDP last promised to create 30,000 jobs during the 1999 election campaign.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, I take no pleasure in rising today to speak in support of this motion because of the policies that have led Saskatchewan to its worst job creation record in the country — the loss of 21,000 jobs in the last 12 months.

We are told that this is the worst record since Statistics Canada began collecting statistics in 1976. It is believed the worst record since the Great Depression of the 1930s. And behind those statistics are of course the personal stories, the tragedies of the people who have had to leave this province to find their future elsewhere.

I don't always find myself agreeing with the policies or positions of the Saskatchewan Party, but for reasons that I will elaborate on today, I feel compelled to support this motion.

It has often been pointed out that left-wing parties are stronger on issues of wealth distribution, but very weak on issues of wealth creation. I accept that as . . . that it is the role of government to make sure that the prosperity of the society is shared by all members of that society. As John F. Kennedy once put it: "A rising tide lifts all boats."

But we know, without some work of government and of public policy, that may not be the case. And it is the role, a legitimate role of government to make sure that all members of the society participate in the wealth of that society.

But unfortunately on the issue of wealth creation — and I say more in sorrow than in shame — that this government has failed miserably and it now continues to invest in the same policies which have held us back. In the new *Partnership for Prosperity* announced this week, again there is still the emphasis on using public companies, Crown corporations, as the vehicle for economic growth.

This is a strategy which has basically been jettisoned by all other countries and provinces and states in the western world,

but it is a strategy to which this government continues to hold on to.

Well the 21,000 who are no longer employed in this province ... we've suffered a net loss of 40,000 people to other provinces between July 1, '99 to July 1, 2000, and a population increase by 2,084. In all likelihood we will lose that many again from July to July this year. Between 1992 and 2001, pardon me, we lost 40,000; in the last year we've lost 2,084 to the year July 1, 2000.

The alarming fact is that the people we are losing are our young people and with them they are taking Saskatchewan's future.

Canada West Foundation issued a report this spring called *State of the West*, which describes some extremely disturbing demographic trends. It revealed that 40 per cent of our population between the ages of 18 and 24 anticipate leaving the province within five years. The expectation of leaving Saskatchewan is even higher among young people who list themselves as students.

(15:00)

Mr. Speaker, 42,000 of our youth. We add to that figure the 40,000 who have left this province since 1992, this government's first full year of managing our economy. We have lost 80,000 future Saskatchewan taxpayers.

In effect, Mr. Speaker, we are paying to educate our best and brightest youth only to export them elsewhere so that their skills and their training can be used to fuel the economic growth and prosperity and to pay the taxes to other jurisdictions. With this strategic and staggering loss of our young and productive people, our future is jeopardized. That is why I feel compelled to speak in support of this motion. This province is a province in crisis.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba has the same population as we do. Manitoba also has a strong agricultural base. But with the same population as Saskatchewan, Manitoba has 61,000 more tax filers, and 2 billion more in assessed taxable income. Manitoba is keeping their young and productive taxpayers, but we are losing 80,000 of ours.

Mr. Speaker, I find myself in agreement with the NDP on the need for strong public services and strong social programs. However, however, we will only have good public services and strong social programs if we have a tax base.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — The Premier said when he was running for the NDP leadership, that you can have social policy without fiscal policy. That is wrong; you cannot. You can only have as much social policy as you have a tax base with which to sustain it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — The offer, the offer to partner with business has fallen on deaf ears. They are not interested in partnering with this government. This is a government which alone in the western world still thinks that Crown corporations is the way to

build the economy as opposed to saying that it is the job of government to provide the necessary infrastructure out of which an economy can grow.

One change in the *Partnership for Prosperity* announced last week, as opposed to the one announced a year ago, was that there was a proposal for a 10 per cent increase in research and development spending announced last year by the government.

Now there's two interesting things about that. In the first place, spending on research and development is an appropriate role for government. That's one of the building blocks, one of the foundational materials out of which you can build an economy.

Furthermore, a 10 per cent increase in R&D (research and development) expenditure is a promise from government which means something, because government has a direct involvement and a direct control over it. If it promises 10 per cent increase in R&D, it can deliver it.

Whereas what we see in *Partnership for Prosperity* announced last week is it is little more than an expression of hope. Figures are thrown out as to the jobs we would like to see materialize and the economic activity we would like to see happen. And yes, we would like that. I don't think there'd be any argument from any resident of this province, certainly not in this House. But the whole thing is little more than an expression of hope.

The target which meant something was the commitment given last year and quietly forgotten this year to increase research and development expenditures by the government.

Well we know that the Crowns are on their own agenda. They do not want to be reined in by the government. And we know that the last minister who questioned the business plan of ISC got a tongue-lashing from the civil servant who was marketing an automated land project system we can't get operating here in Saskatchewan. This minister got a tongue-lashing from a civil servant. And in the ensuing showdown, guess who won and guess who lost?

Mr. Speaker, with the automated land project, my questions for the government are, is there a provision for expenditures and ongoing budget to upgrade it?

We know that software has a notoriously short lifespan. If we're going to market it around the world, we know it will have to be upgraded within a maximum of 2 to 3 years. That's all the lifespan that software has. What provision has been made by ISC for upgrading the land system? That will be a significant budget item.

Also I ask what provision have we made for insurance if we sell the system to other countries that, as I say, we don't have operating here yet? We sell the system to other countries and what if it doesn't work? Do we have insurance to cover that eventuality?

But finally, and most important of all, how does this build an economy in Saskatchewan when we use the Crown corporations (a) to buy up foreign businesses, and (b) to complete with private businesses within this province?

If you use home-monitoring systems to, to chase out of the province private business involved in that sector, even if it is a success, even if it doesn't lose money, where is the net gain in employment? Where is the net increase in wealth?

This goes back to the issue of there's no concept in this government of wealth creation. If you transfer, if you transfer a segment of our economy, SAHO monitoring systems, you take it away from the private sector, you put it into the public sector. Even if it's a success, it stills fails in the sense that you haven't created employment. You haven't created wealth. You have merely transferred from the private into the public.

Well since the start of this session, we've had the following news. We've, we've . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No trips, no trips. I haven't gone anywhere with them. I don't have any plans to either.

Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of this session we've had the following news: 1.2 million on Crown travel; 2 million for the purchase of a home security company in Vancouver; 3 million for Business Watch International to keep a watch over pawn shops; \$11 million in losses for ISC for a system we don't have operating yet; 4 million for losses in Clickabid. We have SaskPower signing a cogeneration agreement where the negotiators were so concerned they issued a disclaimer on the soundness of the deal.

Now we have 8.2 million to buy an insurance company in Toronto in order to protect 30 jobs in Toronto for an insurance company that was having difficulties there. So we're going to, we're going to create 30 million . . . 30 jobs . . . we're going to save 30 jobs in Toronto and, however, we are going to apparently create 10 jobs in Saskatchewan.

Now at 10 jobs at \$8.2 million that works out to — listen to this, Mr. Speaker — that works out to \$820,000 per job created. Now the NDP says they want to create 30,000 jobs. Well here's the math, Mr. Speaker. If it takes \$820,000 for them to create just one job, it will take \$25 billion for them to reach this 30,000 job target.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Well, the math doesn't work out, Mr. Speaker. We need wealth creation. We need job creation. And it is the job of the government to have research and development and the proper investment climate, so that out of this, government and employment and business can grow and develop.

The direct investment of buying an insurance company in Toronto is not a vehicle for building this province — it never has been, it never will be.

Well we know we have other challenges. We know that the farm economy of Alberta and Manitoba, in spite of the present stress and the low commodity prices, the farm economy in our sister provinces is in fact showing modest gains. Ours is doing the worst.

So we know that we need to do even more in diversification and value added than what we have to date. Our . . . (inaudible) . . . and farm income in Alberta is increasing.

Certainly I'm not saying there aren't stresses from one side of this country to the other, but statistically — statistically — the farm industry has, sadly, held up better in our sister provinces than here. We know our farmers have done a tremendous job in diversification. We know we are laying the foundation for value added, but we know that far more needs to be done in that area; far more needs to be done if this province is to have a secure future.

And that is where the government, that is where the government should be putting its energies. That's where the government should be concentrating — not in buying Web sites in the United States or energy marketing companies in Chicago or gas companies in Chile. They should be concentrating on building an agricultural sector for the 21st century.

Well we also know if the government is looking at things they need to be doing to strengthen the economy we know that this province does not have a future unless we end the marginalization of our Aboriginal peoples — unless we make them full participants in our economy.

We are told that by the middle of this century Aboriginal persons will represent 35 per cent of our population. I have no problems with that statistic, but I say this, Mr. Speaker, if Aboriginal peoples are 35 per cent of our population without being as engaged in the economy as everyone else, we face a very, very grim future.

Does the government take seriously the need to once and for all end the marginalization of Aboriginal peoples and make their full and complete participation in the economy and the society a key goal of the government? A goal even more important than buying gas companies in Chile.

Well when the Minister of Economic Development was asked to explain the fact that the NDP had promised to create 30,000 new jobs and instead we've lost 21,000, he said, well actually that figure of 30,000 jobs was more of a party target. Well that sounds like, that sounds like an echo the Minister of Education who discounted what he said in the last campaign as political rhetoric.

We need people's whose commitment to building the economy and creating jobs and keeping our young people here at home is more than a party target, more than political rhetoric — it is something deeply felt and a deep commitment.

It does not matter whether the 30,000 jobs of which the NDP spoke is a promise or a party target. The fact is we now have a discrepancy of 51,000. Instead of moving towards our target, we have the truck in reverse and it's going the opposite direction. Instead of creating 30,000, we have lost 21,000.

Mr. Speaker, it was 3,000 years ago that the writer of Proverbs observed that without vision the people die. The people of Saskatchewan have received no hope, no vision of how we can build an economy and provide for a future for our young people. Our population is suffocating without that vision. Without that vision and hope there is nothing on which to build.

The government tells us we need an optimistic attitude. They are correct. They are absolutely correct. But that optimism, that

hope has to be built on something. It can't be created out of thin air. And it can't be created out of the foreign investments or out of the competition with private business on which they are pinning their hope.

(15:15)

Contrary to what the government tells us, the lack of hope has not come from opposition MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) quoting Statistics Canada. The lack of hope comes from a government which alone in the western world still believes that you can build an economy through the private sector, and which believes it makes sense for civil servants to fly around the world looking for investment opportunities and selling gadgets we can't make work here at home.

If our government needs to leave . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . not in those areas we don't. The hon. member for Regina Qu'Appelle says do we need a public sector. Do we need a public sector to buy Web sites and home monitoring systems and gas companies in South America and telephone companies in Australia? The answer is no; no we don't.

That's not what . . . we have a public sector, and this is where there is a strong, basic philosophical objection, Mr. Speaker. The public sector exists to provide services to the community over which it rules. That is why we need a public sector. No, we don't need a public sector to buy up companies on the other side of the world. So if he's saying, do I think we don't need a public sector? If he's talking about buying up companies on the other side of the world, they say no we don't, no — that's not why we have a public sector.

We have a public sector to provide necessary services to the people of Saskatchewan. That's why we have it. Do we need anything more? Absolutely not. And if that separates me from the hon. member from Regina Qu'Appelle, so be it. But this is what I believe.

If our government needs to leave Saskatchewan to find opportunities, as the member for Regina Qu'Appelle asserts, it is inevitable then that our young people will do likewise. We need vision here at home. We need hope here at home. This government is not giving us that vision and therefore as Proverbs warns us, this will kill our province.

I therefore have agreed to second this motion, and I know that in so doing I speak for the vast majority of Liberal supporters throughout this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — The NDP House Leader commented in this House last week that my resignation from the government had led to a tremendous spurt in economic growth in this province.

I say, Mr. Speaker, if the resignation of just one member of that government can lead to an economic jump-up for this province, what would the resignation of the entire government do. We would be in a boom.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — I second the motion before this House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to enter into this debate. And at the conclusion of my remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be moving an amendment:

To delete all the words after Assembly and substitute the following:

that we encourage the government to continue to look at policies to diversify the Saskatchewan economy, to offset the loss of jobs in the agricultural sector, and to work towards the target of creating 30,000 jobs over the next five years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm extremely, extremely concerned about the doom and gloom attitude that's portrayed by the members opposite across Saskatchewan. Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one thing that we all should do as elected representatives in this province, is help build our province. And the members opposite seem to forget that they have a responsibility to the public to help build the province; to in fact build confidence in our province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

No, they repeatedly go out across the province and talk about doom and gloom, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's why my most recent letter to the editors in rural Saskatchewan has talked about why so glum, chum. It talks about the attitudes of the members opposite as they portray our province, both within the province, and across Canada.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that does nothing to help us diversify our economy, to build our economy, or build confidence in the business people in our province that in fact this is a good place to live, to raise your family, and to enhance your businesses.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to start by talking about a few things in this year's budget. From day one this province has been . . . or this government has been concerned and this province has been concerned about the economic development in our province. There's no doubt we're in the midst of a very serious economic situation in our agricultural economy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's not a single member on this side of the House that is not concerned about the well-being of the people in rural Saskatchewan, our farm families, and the children of those farm families and the future of our farming life.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this budget started out by talking about this government being committed to continue to improve Saskatchewan's economic climate to encourage investment in job creation. Those are words that, when the Minister of Finance spoke them this spring, he took very seriously.

The personal tax reform plan announced one year ago improved the tax system's fairness, simplicity, and competitiveness and lowered personal income taxes for Saskatchewan people.

We have made efforts to help Saskatchewan families and help

Saskatchewan businesses, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we are going to continue to do so.

For 2001 we have eliminated the flat tax, the high income surtax, and the debt reduction surtax, Mr. Deputy Speaker — the most regressive styles of taxes, flat taxes on people.

An Hon. Member: — They were implemented by a right-wing government, weren't they?

Mr. Yates: — Yes. The member asked if they were implemented by a right-wing government. Yes, they were. They were implemented by a right-wing government.

The 2001-2002 budget also significantly enhances the personal tax credits available to Saskatchewan residents to support . . . in support of education, the disabled, and caregivers. We're targeting those who need assistance most in our society, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We're trying to help those who need the most help.

On January 1, 2002, personal income tax rates will be further reduced again, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And personal tax cuts for seniors and families with children will again be enhanced.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the 2001-2002 budget also includes a business tax package — targeted tax reductions to improve competitiveness, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In response to concerns of small-business owners across the province, the small-business corporate income tax rate will be cut from 8 per cent to 6 per cent. That's a 25 per cent cut, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Very significant.

Effective January 1, 2002, the annual amount of income to which the small-business rate will apply will increase from 200,000 to 300,000.

This budget also introduces tax royalty and fee reductions that will create jobs in our resource sector. Of particular importance is the creation of a new tax credit for mineral exploration to promote exploration and development in the North, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

All these developments — this entire direction proposed in the budget — was voted against by the members opposite. Yet they stand here today and criticize the government for not being interested in economic development in our province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to also talk to a few of the fiscal situations that we currently face in this province.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the debt to GDP (gross domestic product) in this province has dropped significantly since 1991 to today. And let me tell you it has dropped to the point that in the year 2001, government debt as a percentage of GDP is down to 23.2 per cent, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from nearly 70 per cent in 1991.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, 23.5 per cent . . . 23.2 per cent from over 70 per cent in 1991. Now the trend during the 1980s when we had a right-wing Conservative government in place was just the opposite. We saw repeated increases in the debt year after year,

and we saw the debt as a percentage of GDP grow year after year. Mr. Deputy Speaker, they didn't balance the budget once.

I want to talk about credit rating. When the NDP government took over in 1991 our credit ratings were quite frankly deplorable. Today we have straight A credit ratings across the board, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a significant turnaround in progress.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is no doubt that there is difficulty in our agricultural sector in this province. There's no doubt that significant difficulty in the agricultural sector over time is going to create difficulty in some other sectors in our province which is so highly dependent upon agriculture — more dependent upon agriculture than any other province in Canada, Mr. Deputy Speaker. More people are employed in the agricultural sector in this province than anywhere else. That's there for a reason, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we have such a significant impact when we have a downturn in the agriculture economy.

I want to talk a little bit about statistics, job statistics in our province though, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I'm going to go across the various sectors of employment by industry in Saskatchewan. I'm going to talk in comparison in 1991 to the year 2000, the last year that we have full statistics, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In 1991, we had 83,500 people employed in the agricultural sector; in 2000, we have 62,100, Mr. Deputy Speaker — a significant decrease of employment in the agricultural sector. But let's talk about the other sectors in our economy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I think it's very important to talk about how diversified our economy has become over the last 9 or 10 years.

In manufacturing in 1991 there was 23,700 people employed in Saskatchewan. In 2000, there's 29,200 — more than 5,500 more people employed in manufacturing. In construction, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 1991 we had 20,800 people employed; in the year 2000, over 24,000. Transportation and warehousing and utilities, Mr. Deputy Speaker, 23,000 in 1991; 31,700 in the year 2000 — a change of 8,700.

Clear pattern forming here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about the diversification of our economy, diversification of our workforce. And our dependency on agriculture, we're becoming less dependent upon agriculture.

In trade, in 1991, 70,500 jobs; in 2000, 76,300 jobs, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In the service industry, 166,100 in 1991; 192,500 in the year 2000.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, public administration is the next number. And we repeatedly hear from the members opposite how we spend too much money on government. Well in 1991 we had 29,500 people employed in public administration; in 2000, we have 26,700, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The government's become more efficient. We have listened to people. We have continued to strive to make government more efficient, to reduce its cost and reduce its size.

Other primary industries, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In 1999 we had 13,200 people employed in other primary industries, and in 2000 we had 15,900.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the total number of people employed in Saskatchewan in 1991 was 453,400 people. In the year 2000 it's 485,000, an increase of 31,600 — that despite significant pressures in the agricultural community; despite significant pressure in the agricultural community, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now the members opposite, they will continue to say, well that's not good enough and we need to do more. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know we need to do more. We will continue to work to improve our province. And we will not go out and talk about the doom and gloom as they portray it across this province. We will talk about this as being a province where we want business to come, where we want to build the economy, and we want to grow for a prosperous future for our children.

We won't talk about the gloom and doom the people opposite do because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, talking about doom and gloom is a self-fulfilling prophecy. If you talk about nothing but negative, that's what you'll get as an outcome.

(15:30)

And the members opposite have done more to hurt this economy in the last three years than they would even want to think about because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they don't want to think about anything but their own political lives. They only care about pointing out all the negatives, looking for something to say is bad and negative so that they can try to win political favour. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's no way to run a province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about gross domestic product. I have a little chart here that shows, from 1990 to 1999, that our gross domestic product rose from 21,617,000,000 to 26,547,000,000, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A significant increase in gross domestic product.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that only occurs through the hard work of the people of this province. It only occurs because you're creating economic growth, creating jobs in our communities. But they don't want to acknowledge any of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to take a few minutes to talk about some various projects across the province and new jobs that have been created throughout Saskatchewan in the last year.

I want to talk about the Co-Op Refinery expansion in Regina. Capital expenditure for that expansion is 250 to \$300 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And at its completion, it'll employ 60 new people. Now is that not economic growth? Is that not expanding our economy?

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, IPEX Inc. of Weyburn is currently manufacturing PVC (polyvinyl chloride) pipe for the oil industry. In April they completed an expansion of that project by investing \$500,000 to add new equipment to produce PVC piping for fibre optic cable for the computer communications

network.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, DirectTel Call Centre opened in Saskatoon in May, 2000. This call centre will employ 225 people.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the members opposite, every time you talk about a new job, have some criticism of it. Can they not say anything positive about the expansion and growth of our province? No, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They can only say negative things about our province.

We wonder, we wonder on this side of the House, if the members opposite can ever say anything positive about this province. Now how — how, Mr. Deputy Speaker, can they ever expect to be government if they do not view things in a positive manner.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Staples opened a call centre in Regina in January, 2001. The inbound call centre will employ over 600 people, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Staples call centre in Regina will employ over 600 people, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The members opposite, they don't want to acknowledge any of the progressive growth made in our province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Alberta Garment Manufacturing Co. acquired the Peter Nygard Apparel factory in Saskatoon in 2000. This facility scheduled for closure by Nygard has been expanded to now employ 145 people. An Alberta company saw the opportunity to come to Saskatchewan and expand their operation. They didn't expand in Alberta. Where did they expand? In Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now the opposition, no, they would never talk about a company from their land of opportunity coming to Saskatchewan and creating new jobs, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 2000, Alcatel Canada won approval from its French parent to proceed with a \$19.6 million expansion designed to increase the output for sales, primarily to the southwest United States. After the full ramp up for production, Mr. Deputy Speaker, employment is anticipated to increase between 90 to 150 people, Mr. Deputy Speaker; another potential 150 jobs in our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the members opposite keep talking about negative things. I've got several pages of positive things and that's just the start of my speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mitchell's Gourmet Foods Inc. is currently constructing a \$42 million smoked sausage and wiener processing facility adjacent to its existing operations in Saskatoon. This facility will open in 2001 and will create 155 new jobs.

Harvest Meats Co. Ltd. has completed an expansion of its sow slaughter line at the company's Yorkton plant. It's created 60 new jobs and a steadily growing economy in Yorkton.

FarmGro Organic Foods Inc. has completed construction of its organic flour mill and grain processing facility located 1 kilometre east of the city of Regina.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, continued expansion in Saskatchewan.

The members opposite don't seem to ever be able to hear that type of news. It's always doom and gloom.

Maple Leaf Foods has completed the expansion of its bacon plant in North Battleford. We heard a minute ago the member from North Battleford talking about how bad the economy is. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, 100 new jobs are created with that expansion in his community. Yet how bad? No, he just tells us how bad everything is in the . . .

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the members opposite continue to shout and yell. Obviously it's . . . there's an old adage, if you throw a stone and somebody yelps that you hit the dog, right?

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they're having some difficulty over there. Because they can't deal with good news. They only want to deal with the doom and gloom.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Centennial Food Corporation of Calgary, Alberta — another Calgary company has announced the construction of a new meat-processing plant in Saskatoon. The Centennial Food Corp. of Calgary, Alberta is moving to Saskatoon again. The company will be investing 34 million and the plant is expected to employ 190 people, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I don't know, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They have so much difficulty with good news.

The Saskatchewan Food Industry Development Centre is currently under construction, with completion expected in mid-March.

Dumur Industries of White City has been very successful by adopting quality management systems such as ISO 9000.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, businesses in this province are continuing to improve, diversify, and divest themselves to improve our economy. The members opposite don't want to acknowledge any of that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can go on for hours but I'm going to just highlight about 20 more, 20 more.

CNH Saskatoon, formerly Flexi-Coil, is in the midst of hiring up to 300 additional production workers — 300 additional people. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the company has added gas production products to that plants.

Doepker Industries of Anaheim was part of a four-way deal between the Department of Highways and Transportation, the village of Anaheim, and the RM (rural municipality) of St. Peter to rebuild the Anaheim access road. With this agreement in mind, Doepker decided to purchase another manufacturing facility in Humboldt. So they're expanding; Doepker is expanding now in Humboldt.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Schulte Industries of Englefeld has been purchased by the Alamo Group from Texas. And because of the low cost of the manufacturing plant in Englefeld, the business will be staying there and has plans for expansion in the coming year. More good news for rural Saskatchewan. They never talk about any of these good things from their

constituencies, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, PMC-Sierra Incorporated of Saskatoon, this high-tech manufacturer of integrated circuits for the communications industry with research offices in Saskatoon, plans to hire an additional 20 full-time employees here in Saskatchewan this coming year, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, International Road Dynamics, one of our Saskatchewan companies, was awarded a \$4.3 million contract with New York state to manage 71 traffic data collection sites. Sales for the company have increased by 40 per cent, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A Saskatchewan company building products here and becoming successful in the world market.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are many, many, many more success stories in Saskatchewan. But I think I'm going to move on to talk a little bit about how others view our province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I want to start out with an article from *The Globe and Mail*. Its title is "Saskatchewan emerges as star of the '90s." Now *The Globe and Mail* — not exactly an NDP rag or a left-wing thinking paper, Mr. Deputy Speaker — but let's listen to what the . . . what Bruce Little says about Saskatchewan:

When we look back on the nineties, which province will be remembered as the star (of) economic performer of the decade?

The winner is Saskatchewan.

The winner is Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So this left-wing rag from Toronto, *Toronto Globe and Mail*, says that Saskatchewan is the star of the '90s. It goes on to say:

What we're measuring here is simple gross domestic product per person (Mr. Deputy Speaker), and Saskatchewan leads the nation.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have about 60, 60 or so articles from various papers I want to share with the members opposite.

Now next I want to talk about an article from the *Macklin Mirror* — the *Macklin Mirror*, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's Wednesday, January 24, 2001 edition. So, you know, very recent.

The Saskatchewan business community is projecting continuing market growth in the year ahead, according to the results of the 2001 Economic Outlook Survey just released by the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce.

So the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce isn't showing the doom and gloom that the members opposite are. They're looking towards the future.

"Job growth predictions show some confidence", Davis said. "Survey results indicated that 38 % of respondents expect to hire additional full and part-time staff . . ."

Thirty-eight per cent of businesses in Saskatchewan expect to hire more staff. That's good news for Saskatchewan, Mr.

Deputy Speaker.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk about sales in our province. This title is from *The StarPhoenix*, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it's from May 15. And it says:

Auto sales accelerate in Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan outperforms the rest of the country in first quarter results.

It doesn't sound like a province that is falling apart to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. New vehicles sales in Saskatchewan bounced back in the first quarter of 2001. Sales are up 7.9 per cent. The largest increase among all the provinces in the first three months of the year. Good news for rural Saskatchewan.

The Leader-Post, February 23, 2001, headline is: "Retail sales up," Mr. Deputy Speaker.

February 21, 2001:

Wholesale rises: provincial wholesalers sold more than 1 billion in sales increases over 1999. The second largest growth spurt in Canada.

Doesn't sound like an economy that's falling apart, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, March 8, 2001, *The Leader-Post* again: "Homes market strong."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, *The StarPhoenix* dated April 6, 2001:

Prospects improve for third straight year.

Canada's economic growth during the past seven years is finally benefiting youths aged 15 to 24, who are finding jobs and getting better wages according to Statistics Canada figures.

"Saskatchewan showed some positive growth for jobs. It is a lot better place for youth than a lot of people make it out to be."

Says Roger Sauve from People Patterns who did the survey.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, people who do independent surveys think Saskatchewan is not a bad place. But they also indicate in their quotes that people out there, perhaps the members opposite would be the ones to target, are out there trashing our province and saying that this isn't a good place for young people to raise their families, to build a future.

It showed, this survey . . . the survey showed most Saskatchewan youth enjoyed better than average employment than their counterparts elsewhere in the country in 2000. So youth had better than average employment in the year 2000 above youth in other parts of the country. That's what the survey shows.

Saskatchewan moved up one place to third in the ranking system among all the provinces in Canada, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The title says, "Youth gaining in job market." The members opposite obviously haven't read the papers.

(15:45)

May 6, 2001, "Regina house sales up 21%."

A lot of very positive indicators, Mr. Deputy Speaker. *The Leader-Post*, May 9, 2000, "Home market blooming." Hardly talking negative about our economy.

Here's one from the Swift Current *Booster* . . . *The Southwest Booster*, from Swift Current, dated April 21, 2001. The title is, "Swift Current house sales record biggest increase in Sask." Hardly talking negative about the economy in Swift Current.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have the *National Post*, a quote from the *National Post* here. It says that:

. . . index shows fewer companies are hiring and can signal a weak . . . (and signals, pardon me) a weaker employment market. The number of jobs advertised in newspapers last month fell in seven of the 10 provinces and rose in three.

So jobs in papers fell in seven provinces and rose in three. Guess which three? Alberta went up by 4 per cent; Saskatchewan by 2.1 per cent. They had the largest increases in the country, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's not bad to be second behind Alberta in number of jobs advertised in our papers, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*, March 29, 2001. The title is:

Saskatchewan growth to outdo national average: TD (Bank) . . . Only Alberta and Newfoundland, at four and 2.9 per cent respectively, will beat Saskatchewan's growth this year, also based on "sizzling growth in the crude oil and natural gas industries," says the TD report.

It goes on to say that they:

. . . expect Saskatchewan's economy to grow at three per cent next year, a rate he . . . (sees as being) sustainable for the province.

A title here from the *Prince Albert Herald*, dated March 9, 2001, "Businesses are optimistic." It goes on to say that:

Prince Albert businesses are more optimistic about their futures than the province's prospects, according to a chamber of commerce survey.

"I think typically there is room for optimism," said Jim McLeod, general manager of the chamber of commerce, noting respondents expect a 14 per cent increase in profit (this year).

There doesn't seem to be pessimism in Prince Albert. There seems to be the only place there's pessimism is in the benches across, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

An Hon. Member: — The sky is falling.

Mr. Yates: — The sky is falling, doom and gloom, that's all they seem to know.

I have the *Miner-Journal* from Esterhazy, Saskatchewan dated Monday, April 30, 2001. Now Esterhazy, Saskatchewan — represented by one of the members opposite — and they talk about “Committee’s optimism is encouraging.” The Esterhazy economic development committee’s optimism is encouraging.

It is encouraging to know (it goes on to say) that despite the gloom and negative attitudes that surface about town from time to time, there are key players who are resolved to find some positive approach to preserving Esterhazy’s future.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they talk about the doom and gloom occasionally around town. I think it only occurs when one of the MLAs from the Saskatchewan Party happens to be in town talking about the doom and gloom. Because it seems the business leaders in those communities are optimistic, but their political leaders that they elected certainly aren’t.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk about record growth with Saskatchewan manufacturer. “IRD posts record growth” it says February 13, 2001.

Sales leap 40 per cent for Saskatoon manufacturer of transportation systems.

Hardly talking about a negative economy in my books, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The *Weyburn Review*, January 24, 2001:

New flax straw plant will create 50 full-time jobs.”

More jobs, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

“Saskatchewan again posts a positive economic outlook,” Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*, February 23, 2001.

Packaging plant up and running. Saskatoon location of Quebec’s Norempac employs 10 people from the city.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, 10 new jobs in Saskatoon again.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, May 21, 2001, Regina *Leader-Post*, “New mine going after frac sand.” More expansion in our Saskatchewan economy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Regina *Leader-Post*, March 5, 2001, “Ag biotech firm sets up in Saskatoon” will employ 12 to 15 employees from the Saskatoon area, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

“Farm Credit Corp. stays in Regina.” Nine years after the Farm Credit Corporation moved here they signed a new 13-year lease to remain in Regina, keeping its jobs here in Regina.

The Shaunavon Standard, May 1, 2001, the paper that the member from Cypress Hills would be very familiar with. And it’s about a topic we’ve discussed in this House before — “Honey Bee Manufacturing begins expansion project,” Mr. Deputy Speaker. More good news to Saskatchewan . . . for Saskatchewan.

Now the member opposite says, no thanks to the government. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we on this side don’t believe the government should be the generator of all economic activity.

Now the members opposite talk out of both sides of their mouth day to day. They say they don’t want the government to be the driver of economic activity in our province and then they complain when we’re not, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I don’t know. I don’t know, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Next article I have, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the May 2, 2001 article from the *Weyburn Review*. It says, “Weyburn Co-op Assoc. to pay \$1.1 million to members.” Obviously they’re doing fairly well in that community.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Humboldt *Journal* says the “Local economy getting \$40 million injection from producers.” It talks about the Stomp Pork Farm Ltd. — \$40 million. It goes on to say, any time you bring 50 jobs to the area it’s significant to our economy.

I don’t know, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have many, many more articles talking about good news in Saskatchewan. Wednesday, May 2, from *The Watson Witness*, again talking about the Stomp Pork Farm and the impact on the whole rural economy around Watson.

Next I want to quote from the *Lanigan Advisor*, April 30, 2001 — “Joint venture announced.”

A successful livestock operator is joining forces with the LeRoy Agra-Pork Co-op Ltd. for a major hog operation and feed mill expansion in LeRoy.

Construction of the project is set to begin in June 2001, with estimates that construction will be completed in one year.

It will create more than 100 new jobs in the Lanigan area. Good news for Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, *The Estevan Mercury* — “Business is booming at the Estevan Co-op,” dated May 2, 2001.

Next I have *The Canora Courier*, dated Wednesday, May 9, 2001, talking about:

Sod-turning ceremony marks start of \$2.5 million construction project.

In Canora, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Outlook paper says:

Record sales for Riverbend Co-op, again.

Dated April 30, 2001.

I have the Humboldt *Journal*, dated January 18, 2001:

Doepker plans expansion into Humboldt.

Doepker estimates when this building is up and running it

could have as many as 75 employees working for them (at that location).

Seventy-five new jobs in Humboldt.

I have the *Gravelbourg Tribune*, dated Monday, May 7, 2001. It says:

Proud moment for community — Kincaid General Store opening.

More jobs in Kincaid.

The *Saskatchewan Valley News*, Wednesday, May 2, 2001:

New greenhouse open in Rosthern for upcoming season.

More new jobs.

I have the *Northwest Herald* from Unity, April 30, 2001:

Council supports local feedlot project.

It's talking about a 1.5 million to start the construction, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the members opposite want to talk about the doom and gloom around the province. We know that, as with any province, we have to continue to grow the economy. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a plan. I want to talk a little bit now about what our plan is. I want to start by talking about the *Partnership for Prosperity*.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government put a plan together, then went out and talked to the people of Saskatchewan about that plan. They had extensive consultations. They included public meetings, stakeholder meetings with business, labour, co-operatives, and community partners.

In total about 10,000 people in this province expressed their views about the future of our economic prosperity and development. They provided suggestions, ideas, and a framework. On top of that, a number of MLAs held public meetings in their constituencies to talk about economic development.

As you read through the document — if you ever take the time to read the document, which I'm not sure the members opposite would — they will see that there are a number of key targets focused on a number of key areas. They include attitude, competitiveness, the new economy and innovation, participation of First Nations and Métis people, modern infrastructure, jobs for youth, and diversification, and value-added processing. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, maybe the members opposite don't want to pay any attention to growing our economy, but the members on the government side definitely do.

Now I want to talk a little bit about the targets that the *Partnership for Prosperity* set. And they're aggressive targets to build our economy. Our first target is to increase the number of jobs by at least 30,000 jobs, Mr. Deputy Speaker — 30,000 jobs by the year 2004.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we want to reduce provincial income taxes by over 25 per cent for an average Saskatchewan family between 1999 and 2003. These are the targets that we are putting forward as a government to achieve, to build our economy.

We want to increase the average personal disposable income by 20 per cent.

We want to achieve net youth in-migration. We want our children not only to stay here in this province to build a future, but we want youth to come here seeking employment to build their futures and to raise their families, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We want to increase the proportion of working-age people with some post-secondary education or higher by 15 per cent. We want to continue to build on a very strong, well-educated group of people in our society, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We want our youth to take advantage of the opportunities of education.

We want to increase the number of businesses and families connected to the Internet by 40 per cent.

We want to increase the employment rate of First Nations and Métis people by 20 per cent.

And we want to target among the comparable provinces and states, Saskatchewan will be the most competitive jurisdiction in which to do business in our key sectors. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we want to improve our competitiveness.

We want to see 7,500 start-ups for new businesses and co-operatives annually. An aggressive target, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but one that we take very seriously.

And we want to increase non-traditional exports by 60 per cent.

Well the members opposite talk about a plan. We don't hear a plan over there except that they'll grow the economy if the national economy co-operates and we have good weather. They're basing any increase on the rain.

We also have a target to become a world leader in research and development that enhances our ability to benefit from our unique resources, infrastructure, market and market interests, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

(16:00)

We want to have 90 per cent of Saskatchewan people see this province as a great place in which to live, work, and do business. And we want to increase the sales of agri-valued process products by 50 per cent.

We want to develop a safe and efficient highway and transportation network that supports economic development. And we want to increase our per capita gross domestic product by an average of 2.5 per cent per year. We also want to increase our tourism revenue by 25 per cent to 1.5 billion annually.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've spent a lot of time putting together targets and a plan to build our economy. Now the members opposite may want to talk about the doom and gloom

that the situation in our agriculture economy is creating, the downshift in the agriculture community is putting significant pressure on our province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But we on this side don't want to focus on the negative, we want to build for the future. And that's what our plan is about — building for the future.

And so for those reasons, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to move, seconded by the member from Regina South:

That all the words after “Assembly” be deleted and substituted with the following:

encourage the government to continue to look at policies to diversify the Saskatchewan economy, to offset the loss of jobs in the agricultural sector, and to work towards the target of creating 30,000 jobs over the next five years.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure to follow my colleague from Regina Dewdney who I have to say I enjoyed his speech very much. In fact it used a lot of the same material I was going to in mine, but fortunately good news always bears repeating.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to address a couple of issues today that several of the members have spoken about. Both the mover and seconder of the original motion, and indeed the mover of the amendment, talked about the job numbers in the province. I want to speak about putting these into perspective.

Let me start by saying job numbers are one of the things that we watch in this province to see the overall trend and the direction. All of us, all of us are concerned by the large number of job losses in the agricultural sector. The fact that we have seen roughly 16,000, almost 17,000 jobs move out of the agricultural sector over the past year is of concern to all members on both sides of the House.

I say some concern, but I don't say that it is really that much of a surprise. We have seen this really as something that has been coming for some time over the last several months. We have seen a decline in agricultural employment. We have seen a decline, frankly, for the last 10 years in terms of this. This is, however, an accelerated decline and it's having an impact on our overall job numbers.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have spoken during this debate. They've talked during the question period, phrasing their questions, speaking of a death spiral of the Saskatchewan economy. A death spiral is far, far from what this is.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that perhaps the members opposite have been confusing the employment stats with their popularity ratings and that they're confusing a death spiral with the death roll that their party is in.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we take these job stats into account, when we put them in perspective, what we saw is that from April to May a loss of 5,000 jobs in Saskatchewan. Those 5,000 jobs primarily were lost out of the agricultural sector. Although they were offset by some gains in other sectors, we're still

talking about a loss of 5,000 jobs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk about some of the things that we are seeing in our economy today and how it impacts on job numbers. When we take a look at the agricultural numbers in particular, I want to address some of the comments that were made by the seconder of the original motion when he talked about the loss. And this was not particularly any different anywhere else, but that Saskatchewan somehow should be immune to it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the House should know that agriculture lost nearly 59,000 jobs during the May 2000 and May 2001 time period throughout the country — 59,000 agricultural jobs. But the members opposite don't mention this.

Now we wonder why the job losses here, the 16,000 — let's put this in perspective — 16,000 in the province that has roughly 11 per cent of its jobs based on agriculture — 11 per cent of the province's jobs are in agriculture. So we have had a loss of 16,000 jobs in agriculture.

Nationally though, 60 . . . nearly 60,000 agricultural jobs were lost. The members opposite say, well, we should be doing something about it. This clearly points to the fact that we have a national problem that the federal government has to take more time to take a look at.

I say to the members opposite that they should do whatever they can to implore their federal party, the Alliance Party, to get off of its kick of its own death spiral and start paying attention to the Saskatchewan farmers that sent those MPs (Member of Parliament) to Ottawa. That's what they should be doing, Mr. Speaker. They should spend less time, I say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, worrying about the cheap politics that they play in this House and more time focusing in on the problems.

The fact that we have seen nearly 60,000 agricultural jobs lost in Canada in the last year says to me that this is an issue that the federal parliament has to address. This says to me that this is an issue that all members of parliament have to address. And I would say that the day they need to address that is now, not to continue with their petty bickering within their federal party of the Alliance Party, not for the Prime Minister to simply put on blinders and say all is well.

We need to speak with a common voice so that people understand what's happening in our economy. This is not something unique to Saskatchewan; this is something which is happening across the country and impacting in Manitoba and impacting in Alberta.

The member for North Battleford said, oh, there was a job growth in agriculture in Manitoba and Alberta. Well I'm afraid he should check his figures, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because he is wrong.

In Manitoba employment in agriculture was down 4,800 over that same time period. And the members opposite should hear this. There were 14,500 fewer agricultural jobs in Alberta during that time period. Oh yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, even in Alberta nearly 15,000 farmers were out of work.

But the members opposite don't talk about this as being the case with this industry needing help. The members opposite don't talk about it as being something which is affecting us across this nation. What they do is they selectively pick a stat and they drive it and they drive it and they drive it over the cliff to the point that it plummets and is simply splattered to the point that it makes no more sense.

The member opposite from North Battleford went on saying that agricultural jobs are growing in other provinces. Complete and utter nonsense — complete and utter, utter nonsense.

Now let's put this in perspective. The 14,000 jobs that were lost in agriculture in Alberta are comparable to here. Comparable in number. We lost almost every . . . for every job that was lost here in Saskatchewan in the agriculture sector, Alberta lost one as well.

The difference, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the magnitude of agriculture in our economy. Here nearly 11 per cent of the jobs in Saskatchewan are in the agricultural sector. What are they in Alberta? Well I don't hear the members from the Alberta party say anything today. The number over there is about 3.8 per cent — less than 4 per cent of the jobs in Alberta are agriculture related.

Even in Manitoba, where the member for North Battleford says that these two provinces — Manitoba and Saskatchewan — are virtually alike, it's simply not true. In Manitoba, roughly five, five and a half per cent of the jobs are agricultural related.

So it's one thing for the members opposite to say, oh, we should be being more like Alberta, we should be being more like Manitoba. The fact is that we have a problem in agriculture which goes across this country. But the impact is obviously here, felt hardest here in Saskatchewan because agriculture continues to be a major part of our provincial economy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've listened to the speeches with great interest, and I think we need to understand here that there are going to be, from month to month, job growth in some sectors, job losses in others. The overall trend is what we need to keep our eye on. And I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the overall trend for Saskatchewan is a very, very positive one.

The members of this Assembly may be interested to know that since this government took office in 1992 — its first full year in office — non-agricultural employment increased by 56,000 jobs; 56,000 new jobs were created here in Saskatchewan in the non-agricultural sector.

What's the non-agricultural sector? Well the members opposite might know that as the private sector, because that's where the jobs were created — in the private sector.

But the members opposite never mention this. The members opposite, Mr. Deputy Speaker, never talk about the 56,000 more people who work in the non-agricultural industries. They never talk about the tens of thousands of families in this province who have found employment during the last 10 years. They don't talk about the job growth which has been steady, steadily increasing during that time period, year over year over year. What they focus in on, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are the negatives.

Now we cannot be Pollyannas over here. We have to also take a look at the negatives and we've got to understand what's happening. We know that there's been a loss in agricultural employment. We know that there has been a job loss and we know that there has been a steady job loss for decades.

What is of concern to us, and we have talked about on many occasions in this Assembly — through all-party resolutions, through representations made by the Minister of Agriculture to the federal parliament, to the federal minister — is the need for us to have a national strategy to deal with trade-related employment issues and agriculture. That is an essential item to have if we were to reverse the trend in agricultural loss.

But, but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the members opposite seem to neglect this point, and instead, simply point the finger to us on this side and say why aren't we correcting it, why are we not correcting it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you have a national problem that sees 60,000 jobs vanish in one year in one industry across this country, when you see Saskatchewan losing no more really than the number of jobs lost in Alberta in terms of the number in agriculture, you have to say, gee, maybe there's something that the federal government has to take a look at.

Now the member for North Battleford, the all-powerful, independent Liberal, certainly I'm sure he has picked up the phone and called Ralph Goodale to talk to him about it. Perhaps Mr. Goodale is not taking his phone calls — it wouldn't surprise me. I'm sure that high-powered true Grit that he is over there has been on the phone to the Prime Minister. It wouldn't surprise me at all, high-powered member that he is. But perhaps the Prime Minister is not taking his phone calls either.

Because I'm sure if these individuals were taking that member's phone calls, they would be hearing from him the same thing that you hear from us which is that agriculture is an issue that has to be addressed on the floor of the House of Commons and in the cabinet room in Ottawa. That's where he was last year when he sat on the coalition benches, and because he is an hon. member who is consistent and so . . . keeps telling us his principles, I'm sure that's the same song he is singing today.

It's unfortunate, it is unfortunate that he has fallen in with a bad crowd over there, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is unfortunate that he has lost his way. But I am sure that as this debate goes on, he will see that the people who stand up for Saskatchewan are seated on this side of the Assembly and that we are continuing to work for the economic development of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(16:15)

Mr. Thomson: — I want to speak for a bit about how the approach . . . the approach that we need to take in this province in order to grow our economy, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We need to understand that the growth of jobs in this province are happening throughout the province. They're happening here in Regina, they're happening in Saskatoon, they're happening in our smaller urban centres, and yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they

are happening in non-agricultural parts . . . in the non-agricultural industries in rural Saskatchewan. I think the members opposite who represent some of these ridings should feel compelled to stand up and talk about the growth that is going on in their constituencies in terms of jobs.

I never hear — despite the fact we've given them many opportunities in this House — I never hear members from the forest fringe riding stand up and talk about the growth in the forestry sector. I never hear the members on the opposition side stand and talk about the growth that's happening in terms of the manufacturing in their communities. I never hear the members stand up and talk about the positive things that the member for Regina Dewdney has outlined that have been chronicled in the daily and weekly newspapers of this province. The members refuse to celebrate the successes of this province.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you may say, why do I mention this? I mention this because the chamber of commerce in their economic development strategy, in their economic development strategy called Action Saskatchewan, said one of the single most important things that has to change for economic growth is attitude — is attitude. And you have to ask, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if that kind of a bad attitude from the members opposite is the kind of attitudinal change that the business leaders are looking for as they take a look at investment climate and job growth.

I dare say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that that's not what the chamber of commerce had in mind. I dare say that that's not what the business leaders are saying to us as we meet with them across this province. That's not what working families are telling us as they come back to this province and they continue to work here.

As I talk to young people who are starting their career in this province, they feel optimistic, Mr. Speaker. And I think it's incumbent on the members opposite to leave behind their doom and gloom of political opportunism, leave behind your scripts that are written for them neatly by a bunch of staffers in their offices, and that they should move instead to listening to people like the chamber of commerce. They should listen to the business leaders, they should listen to the entrepreneurs, they should listen to the young working families, they should listen to the labour unions who say Saskatchewan is a great place to live, it's a good place to invest, and it is an economy which we are going to continue to see grow.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, or sorry, Mr. Speaker, we are seeing Saskatchewan's economy grow. We are seeing the growth in virtually all sectors of our economy and in all regions of our province. And this is something we should be particularly proud of.

It is, I think, a positive sign of the strength of our previous economic development strategies, the *Partnership for Growth* and the partnership for — What was the first one? — *Partnership for Renewal*. It was a little bit before my time, Mr. Speaker; unfortunately I didn't get here until 1995 so I missed the first one. But the *Partnership for Growth* and now the *Partnership for Prosperity*, I think are continuing to show the way for Saskatchewan business to grow and for our Saskatchewan economy to grow.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — I don't know why the members opposite continue to point to the doom and gloom. I read here a report, capital market report from the Investment Dealers. Oh, I say there's a socialist lot if there ever was, wasn't there — those Investment Dealers. What are they saying in May 2001? They are saying the Saskatchewan economy, I'll quote now:

The Saskatchewan economy is on track to completing its ninth straight year of expansion.

Ninth straight year of expansion. Quoting again:

Growth in 2000 was estimated at 3.4 per cent and will likely moderate this year to the 2 per cent range as weaker demand for exports adversely affects provincial expansion.

And even with that, Mr. Speaker, still economic growth. There was a time in the early '90s when people thought you would have economic growth without job growth. We were concerned as we moved into '95 and into our new phase, or at that point our new phase of economic partnership strategies, that we were not seeing the accompanied job growth that came with the economic growth. By 1995 that had changed and had corrected itself. And as I pointed out earlier, we have seen during that time of this government a 53,000 job increase — 53,000 in the non-agricultural sector.

The previous government, when it was in, constantly said we need to diversify our economy. They've constantly harped from the opposition side that we need to diversify our economy. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to tell you today we have diversified our economy. Saskatchewan's economy today is more diversified than it has been at any point in its history, and we are continuing to push that economy and allow it to expand and grow and diversify more again.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, we are doing this for several different approaches. Innovation is central to seeing job growth, innovation in the business sector. Business however tells us there are many things that they need support from government on — many things. The members opposite will know this and I know the member for Kelvington in particular will know this because of her role in the Saskatchewan Research Council many years ago.

She will know that research and development are one of the areas where government can help provide the infrastructure and the support which will allow our economy to grow. If we need proof of that, if the members opposite don't believe it, I say all they need to do is go to Saskatoon, take a look at the great things that have come out of Innovation Place, and they will understand the thousands and thousands of jobs that can be created where you have partnerships that are supported through common sense.

As we see the great Saskatchewan business success stories, I can point to many of those being started with a sense of co-operation and partnership between government and the private sector. In many cases, Mr. Speaker, the private sector

has acted alone to create jobs, and to those people I salute them for the work and the innovation and the capital they put at risk to do that.

I also want to say to the member for Redberry, who speaks often in this House about the labour climate in this province, that we have much to owe in this province to the labour unions who also work with business and work with our economy to make sure that we have a relatively stable labour force; that we have a relatively stable environment for business to function in. We are successful here in Saskatchewan because people pull together to make the ventures work.

Mr. Speaker, we have taken a look at some of the areas where we have seen new ideas in innovation move us in directions that we didn't think, even five years ago, were possible. I was recently down in Weyburn at the oil and gas show and had the opportunity to talk to people there about some of the new innovations and how this is expanding their opportunities in oilfields that they thought were nearing the natural end to their natural producing life.

We see areas where they were using CO₂ to extract more oil from resources. We see areas where they are using new innovation from biotechnology to make better use of crops. We're seeing areas where we are expanding our IT (information technology) knowledge that we didn't expect were possible before. And I point to the area that's clearly one of my favourite projects — the Petroleum Technology Research Centre at the University of Regina — and what will soon be its sister station with the climate-control centre.

Areas that we have been able to bring together — innovation, technology, business, government, the co-operative sector — to work to build an economy that will prosper and create jobs and economic growth throughout the province, not just here in Regina, not just in Saskatoon, but in communities, in the oilfields, in the wheat fields throughout this prairie, Mr. Speaker, and that's what we're seeing because Saskatchewan people are working together.

That is what we're talking about by setting an economic climate for growth. That is what we're talking about when we talk about a partnership, a partnership between businesses, between business and government; a partnership that allows us to create a regulatory environment that people can work in, create a labour environment people can work in, to create a business environment for businesses to come forward and people to work in. That's what we believe in.

We don't simply believe, as the members opposite do, that you simply throw your hands up, throw the doors to the vault open, and let people come take what they need in hopes that this is going to create growth.

They've tried this before, Mr. Speaker. We've seen the members opposite try this approach and it's very much the basis of their approach. It's a recipe for disaster. Today we are still paying almost \$2 million a day on interest to clean up the mess that they created the last time they opened the province for business.

Opening, unfortunately opening Saskatchewan for business

really meant just opening the vaults. And it is something that Saskatchewan people today have to wonder how much better off we'd all be if we weren't still paying for the debt — their legacy to this province. How much better off we would be if we could move more aggressively to reduce the income taxes. How much better off we'd be if we can invest more aggressively in our post-secondary institutions. How much better off we would be if we could invest in new technology. Imagine, just imagine what we could do.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you and tell members of this House that we're moving in that direction. The budget laid down by the Minister of Finance had many important initiatives in it on the public sector spending side, but it had many important initiatives in it for the business climate of this province.

The fact that we have reduced the small-business tax is a very important signal to Saskatchewan business and to investors across this country. We are doing this in a smart way. Saskatchewan small-business corporate tax will be reduced by 25 per cent this year — a 25 per cent reduction — down to 6 per cent from 8 per cent. This is something that we are doing in order to encourage small-business people to continue to grow their businesses here in Saskatchewan. We're increasing the threshold for the income that is counted under that cap, Mr. Speaker.

Those are the areas that this government is moving in, and it's something I think we need to be very positive about.

I want to talk for a minute about some of the revitalization initiatives that we are making, Mr. Speaker. We, on this side of the Assembly, have set out an economic framework that is a balanced approach to economic growth and improves the quality of life while we grow the economy.

We are fostering a competitive environment in which to do business. I've talked about that in terms of reducing the overall debt of the province; how we've been able to apply this to reducing the corporate tax rates, how we've been able to invest in other areas. And we've undertaken a regulatory review to make sure that people have a better understanding of the regulatory framework they're working under. We have embarked on a great number of positive initiatives to foster our competitive environment.

It may interest the members opposite to know that Saskatchewan is indeed quite a competitive place. When they take a look at the . . . I don't think I have the graph in front of me. But when we take a look at the competitiveness of our major cities, in our markets around us, including the American ones, what we find, Mr. Speaker, overwhelmingly, is that Regina and Saskatoon — because these are the two centres they take a look at in the larger urban centres — remain among the most competitive not only in the Prairie provinces . . . Yes, incidentally, Regina is more competitive than Calgary and Edmonton and Winnipeg and Minneapolis and, with due respect to our American legislators who are visited, than many of the Midwestern centres that are compared against.

We find that Saskatoon is equally competitive. It's competitive because we have a solid and balanced approach to building our economy. People will tell you, business people will tell you if

you spend any time with them, that as they take a look at the cost of doing business here in Saskatchewan, particularly when you do the comparisons with other places, our costs are really quite reasonable.

We hear time and again about the costs in Ontario and how the payroll taxes are affecting them. We hear time and again about how the costs of attracting labour are so much more than other places. We hear time and again about how people are having difficulty attracting people to come and work.

Saskatchewan has its fair share of problems. But I can tell you, it has its fair share of successes.

Mr. Speaker, we see Saskatchewan people talk about . . . You need only talk to the people who moved with Crown Life to Saskatchewan, now that it's been here for some time, and they love it.

A friend of mine actually recently moved from Toronto; he works with a pharmaceutical company. He's moved his family back out here so he could work in this province. Why? In large part because of the quality of life. Also in part, the quality of the job. He wanted to raise his daughters here because he thought there was something inherently valuable about Saskatchewan.

And I think that the members opposite should spend less time talking to their speech writers in their closed offices and more time talking to ordinary Saskatchewan people and listen to what they have to say and the successes of why they think this is a great place to live.

Mr. Speaker, this is part and parcel of our partnership program and the economic climate that we are trying to set here in Saskatchewan. To simply believe that you can do it all with tax cuts as the members opposite say, is not — not — the way to build your economy. It is not the approach.

(16:30)

Mr. Speaker, we are working with people in every sector of this economy to strengthen the opportunities there. My colleague from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley has spent a fair amount of time working with the ACRE committee in terms of — the Action Committee on the Rural Economy — taking a look at opportunities there. I hope that later today when he has a chance to address this, if he'll talk some about some of the initiatives he's working on now as the Legislative Secretary responsible for ethanol development and the opportunities that this has for growing our economy.

Because I think that in many ways we need to start paying attention to some of these issues and the seriousness of their application in terms of helping to build and foster a diversified economy throughout Saskatchewan.

Ethanol production, I won't say much about it because obviously the member from Qu'Appelle will say more when he stands up, but it provides a real opportunity for us to take a look at this.

When I listen to what businesses say throughout the province . . . Recently when I was at the oil and gas show I had the

opportunity to listen to several people talking with SaskPower officials about energy issues.

Many of us took energy for granted as simply always being there, electrical energy. I think as we take a look over this last six months, we start to understand what an important part secure, cheap supply has in terms of building your economy.

Take a look at the problems that they have in southern California, northern California, and San Jose, and the Silicon Valley in terms of having secure power supply, and you hear that. You hear this in terms of the concerns as we talk to the oil sector about price.

It will interest the members opposite to know that today we're selling power, electrical power, cheaper than they are in Alberta to the energy customers — cheaper. But the members opposite never say anything good about that.

The members opposite only like to cherry-pick the bad comparisons. They like to come and they like to say Saskatchewan is such a horrible place to do business, terrible under this government. But they are simply wrong, Mr. Speaker.

This government's economic development plan has taken into account labour; it's taken into account business; it's taken into account taxes; it's taken into account the inputs, Mr. Speaker. This is a great place to do business. And it's one of the reasons Saskatchewan was called by *The Globe and Mail* the star of the '90s. It is one of the reasons we are continuing to see solid growth, despite falling exports. It is one of the reasons we are going to continue to see job growth over the next decade that this government is in power.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I didn't talk a little bit about what their alternative is and what underlies their motion and the reasons for us needing to amend it today.

We've listened to the Leader of the Opposition talk about his great economic development plan, a plan, and I'm quoting now from *The Leader-Post* of April 6 where he says:

If the Saskatchewan Party wins the next election, Hermanson said the population outflow would be stemmed within a year or two and the province would then grow (oh but wait) if the weather and the national economy co-operate.

Oh well I didn't know that this was . . . I guess we can simply call this the sunshine policy or maybe it's a policy from the rain man, I'm not completely sure, Mr. Speaker. But as I take a look, this is a pretty weak economic development platform that says that the province would then grow if the weather and the national economy co-operate.

Well wouldn't that be nice. Wouldn't that be nice. I have to say that this is the kind of genius from the opposition that I know Saskatchewan people are going to take great faith in as they listen to the members opposite. I know it's the kind of thing that they're going to be saying, well what exactly do you mean? Do

you mean that it's got to be sunnier out or it's got to be rainier out or what are you talking about? And what about the national economy? You mean Ottawa has to take complete responsibility?

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite know that their plan is paper thin and I think it's a shame that this is what they're attempting to tell Saskatchewan people. We'll turn the corner — we'll turn the corner and then we will see continued growth.

Mr. Speaker, we know that that's not the way to do economic development. I appreciated getting an advance copy of the Leader of the Opposition's speech to his party faithful at the Sheraton Cavalier on May 23. It was a brown envelope that was delivered to us and I appreciated the advance copy. It made for entertaining reading.

In it he outlines slightly more, slightly more about his economic development platform. And he says . . . Let me read this to you here from his speech. The Leader of the Opposition said that their platform would be — as opposed to ours — their's would be a virtual checklist for economic renewal.

They would cut taxes on productivity. Well that's a good idea. It's too bad they voted against it in the provincial budget when we introduced it, Mr. Speaker. They say they would reduce the public debt. All I can say to the members opposite, okay, we'll take your word on it but I'm not exactly sure that even if your leader did sign this speech that I would believe it. After \$15 billion, Mr. Speaker, of debt that they built up I have to wonder whether . . . or what's this new-found interest in reducing the debt.

I would also have to ask, Mr. Speaker, where this money for debt reduction would come from. Where would it come from? I suspect, Mr. Speaker, that the answer to that question is from the fire sale of our Crown corporations, because that's what they believe, is that you sell off the Crowns to pay down the debt. Sell it for whatever you can get for it. Reduce the debt and go on a spending spree.

The Leader of the Opposition says he would stop propping up dying industries. Now this is my favourite comment from the member, the Leader of the Opposition, in his economic development plan. He says they would not prop up dying industries.

As I look through this speech, I don't see much detail but I would sure be interested to know what dying industries he is talking about. I would be very interested to know which dying industries the Leader of the Opposition is going to stop propping up. The list is one that I would hope that the Leader of the Opposition would soon define because I think Saskatchewan people are going to want to know pretty soon what he means by stopping propping up dying industries.

When I take a look at the job losses that we are seeing in agriculture, Mr. Speaker, I would say that with all the problems the farmers are facing, the last thing they need is for the Leader of the Opposition to bring in his economic development plan to further help them out.

The member goes on to say that he would, in their economic

development plan, keep the cost of doing business including labour costs competitive and improve the incentive to work through welfare reform. Well there's an original idea. I half wonder who wrote this, if it wasn't my good friend Grant Schmidt from Melville because this is what it sounds like. It was those poor people keeping our economy down again, Mr. Speaker.

But this is exactly the kind of platform that they have brought to the Saskatchewan people, that they say this is the way to change, this is what needs to be done in order to grow jobs in population and increase investment.

And believe it or not, Mr. Speaker, they even sucked in the member for North Battleford into this. Clearly months and months of isolation have had an impact on him because he would surely have seen through this paper-thin approach to economic development that the members opposite advocated back when he was part of this side and helped to develop our economic development plan. And now he claims to have no knowledge of it. But that's what the member opposite got sucked into. It's unfortunate.

That, Mr. Speaker, that is the plan of those members opposite: cut off the dying industry, stop propping them up, pick on the poor people, cut the labour costs. Well we all know what that means. We know we've listened to the member from Redberry Lake go on at great length about how the unions are job killers, he calls them. Their mean-spirited plan is not a plan to re-engineer our economy. It's a mean-spirited plan to re-engineer the Saskatchewan society, and Saskatchewan will have nothing — I repeat, nothing — to do with it or the members opposite as they start to take a closer look at it.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have learned little in their time in exile. They have learned little in terms of how you build an economy. And they have not learned from their mistakes.

The economic development platform that the Leader of the Opposition outlines is not really that much different than Grant Devine's open for business. A plan that saw jobs decline. A plan that saw debt increase. A plan that saw Saskatchewan people driven out of this province in record numbers. That was the plan they pursued, Mr. Speaker.

Our plan, our plan is very different. Our plan focuses on partnerships. Our plan focuses on economic growth. Our plan focuses on the strength of this province, which are our business sector, which are our investors, which are our Saskatchewan working people.

Mr. Speaker, our plan targets a growth of 30,000 new jobs. The members opposite say that's not possible, but I point simply to the 56,000 new jobs that were created in the non-agricultural sector since this government took office in 1992. I point to that and I say that 60,000, nearly 60,000 jobs were created in that sector since we came to office show that we can create another 30,000 during this term.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, our plan says that we will reduce income taxes. I think it would interest the members

opposite to know — if they happened to read the *National Post*; clearly as the member for Wood River would point out, nothing but a socialist rag — but that *National Post* said on Saturday that in 2002 Saskatchewan would continue to be a national leader in terms of its marginal, top marginal tax rates.

An Hon. Member: — Say that again.

Mr. Thomson: — It would continue to be a national leader in terms of its top marginal tax rates.

It would interest the members to know that the top marginal tax rate on income here in this province today is the second lowest in Canada. The second lowest in Canada.

Now why is that important? That's important because in those top income brackets we often find the people who are the investors, who have the money to drive our economy, who have money to invest in business, who are the entrepreneurs of this province. And we're saying to them, Saskatchewan is right up there, right up there with Alberta.

Even after Gordon Campbell comes in in British Columbia, Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you that Saskatchewan will still be in the top Canadian jurisdictions for those income earners.

We have also implemented a plan of tax fairness, Mr. Speaker, which sees all people see a decrease in their income taxes. We were able to do this through fiscal prudence, and through a balanced agenda.

We want to see an increase in the average disposable income, Mr. Speaker. We want to see an increase in the rate of First Nations and Métis people participating in our economy. And I say to the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, that I find it interesting — interesting that nothing more than lip service is paid to that in the speech from the Leader of the Opposition to his business dinner. Paper-thin promises, that's a most unfortunate thing.

But our plan is a real plan for economic growth. A plan for economic growth in our cities. A plan for economic growth in our rural areas. A plan for economic growth in all people.

I listen to the members opposite talk about how we need to move forward. And we do. I think it's important to note that this House has put forward family-friendly legislation to allow people to stay home with their . . . spend more time with their children and continue to go back to the workforce on their terms. That's an important piece of legislation, which shows that we have a balanced agenda, not to just economic growth but to the well-being of families.

We will remain competitive and comparable in terms of our economic . . . our business environment. I found the graph that I was looking for earlier, Mr. Speaker, which does show that Regina is, in terms of the cost rankings, the most competitive place to do business among Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, Dallas, Minneapolis. Mr. Speaker, we need to start spreading that message — not the gloom and doom from the members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on at some length to talk about the

things that we are going to do to diversify our economy; the things that we're going to do to make sure that Saskatchewan people share the wealth and enjoy the benefits of that new economy, but Mr. Speaker, we're going to be here a long time.

And over the next decade I look forward to the opportunity, the good people of Regina South willing, to stand many times to talk about the successes that they — they, the Saskatchewan people — have in building this economy and to continue to point to the holes in the gloom and doom attitude of the members opposite.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to take this opportunity to adjourn the debate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The division bells rang from 16:45 until 16:55.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 30

Calvert	Addley	Hagel
Lautermilch	Atkinson	Serby
Melenchuk	Cline	Sonntag
Goulet	Van Mulligen	MacKinnon
Wartman	Thomson	Prebble
Belanger	Crofford	Axworthy
Nilson	Hamilton	Junor
Harper	Jones	Higgins
Kasperski	Trew	Osika
Lorjé	Yates	McCall

Nays — 27

Hermanson	Elhard	Heppner
Julé	Krawetz	Draude
Boyd	Gantfoer	Toth
Stewart	Eagles	Wall
Bakken	McMorris	D'Autremont
Weekes	Bjornerud	Kwiatkowski
Brkich	Harpauer	Wakefield
Wiberg	Hart	Allchurch
Peters	Huyghebaert	Hillson

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:59.